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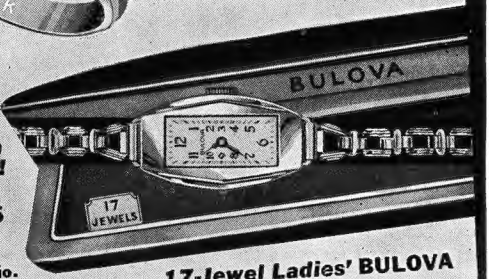

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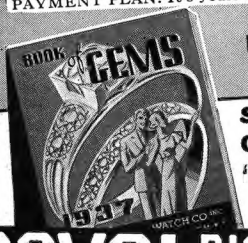

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Adventure

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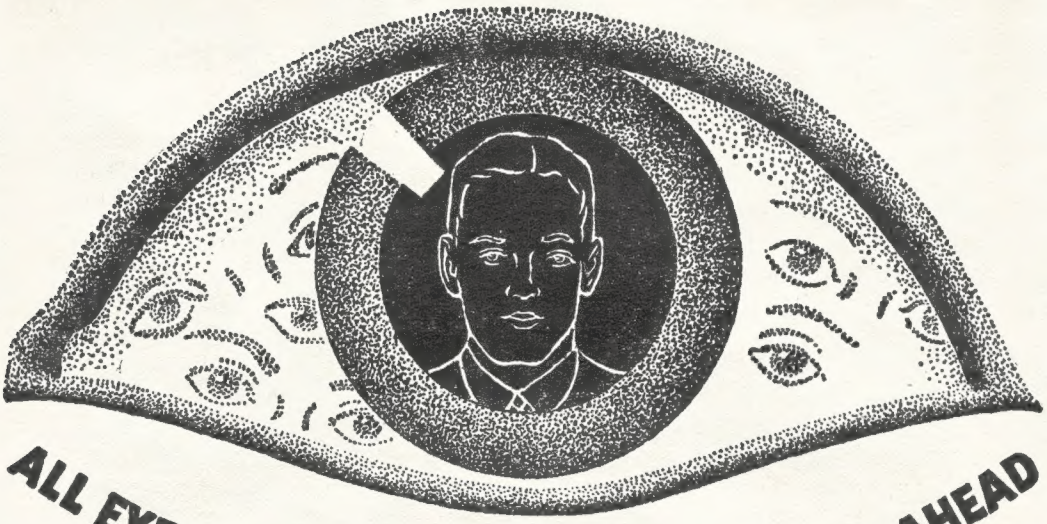

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Lost Trails

Luella Winans Campbell, Las Cruces, New Mexico, wants word of relatives of late Major Ira Winans, Rochester, New York, or relatives of Walter Winans, Baltimore, Md.

Where is Robert Pinkerton of 131st Company, U. S. Marine Artillery, Quantico, Va., 1917-1919? His friend Thomas P. Jordan, 1523 N. Main Ave., Scranton, Pa., queries.

William L. Harcus, Kerrville, Texas, wants news of his brother Henry (Harry) L. Harcus, Kansas City, Mo., fearing abrupt end of correspondence in 1922 meant sudden death.

Wolffe W. Roberts, Box 56, Amherst, N. H., wants word of Frank R. (Jack) Frost, last heard from at Oakland, Calif.

Richard J. Lutz, R. D. 1, Verona, Pa., would like to hear of Frank Fittante. They were marines at Quantico in 1926, when Lutz was ordered to China and Fittante to Nicaragua.

Anyone in D. Company, 15th U.S. Infantry, that went to China in 1912, or anyone in the Band of the 2nd Battalion, South Wales Borderers, in China 1913, 1914—write Pennock S. Broomall, 216 West 5th St., Chester, Pa.

Frank Merteul, care The Billboard, 25-27, Opera Place, Cincinnati, Ohio, wants word of a wartime friend, James (Roughhouse Jim) Novak, grenadier, voltigeur, 10th Company, First Regiment, French Foreign Legion in 1918; later transferred into Czechoslovak legion in France; last heard from 1925-1926 camping at Caddo Lake in northern Louisiana trying to recover his health.

A letter has come from Pendleton, Bangkok, Siam, for Capt. R. W. van Raven. Who knows Capt. van Raven's address?

Word wanted of Hamilton Redfield Norvell, sometimes called "Reddy" or "Curley," by his brother Stevens Thompson Norvell, 4449 Howard Ave., Western Springs, Ill. Their father died on Dec. 30, 1936. Norvell lived in Cincinnati until 1932, went to Southern Ontario.

Clarence Bailey, Cherryvale, Kansas, seeks news of Wylie Boss Smith, who sailed as oiler in June, 1934, from New Orleans on S. S. Point Salinas.

Otho Amos Duckwiler, formerly of Roanoke, Va., joined U. S. Army in 1914. Stationed Texas City, Texas, in 1914. Transferred to Field Artillery stationed Canal Zone 1918, 1919. His sister has died, and her daughter, Virginia Pulewich, 10 East 109 St., New York City, wants to get in touch with him.

Jock Miller, D D Ranch, Beeville, Texas, wants word of William Henry Miller, who left home four years ago at age of 14 and was last heard from digging gold at Ridgway, Colorado.

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If you, too, need these vital elements to aid in building you up, get these new "7-power" Ironized Yeast tablets from your druggist today. Then day after day watch flat chest develop and skinny limbs round out to natural attractiveness. Soon you feel like an entirely different person, with new charm, new personality.

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THE SAINT

A novelette

By MAX BRAND

HE WAS smiling continually, with such an air of removal above the concerns of ordinary mortals, with such an upward lifting of the head, that his fellows in the boat had called him, from the first day of labor and thirst, "The Saint."

By the second day they used the name rather in irony than in praise, for they observed that the smile of The Saint—or "Saint George" as some called him—was merely the veiling of a nature bright and hard and cold and edged like Spanish steel.

He was far from a handsome man, for he had a long face, strong in the cheekbones and the jaw like some pharaoh of early Egypt whose portrait comes to us by a sculptor who knew his ruler was a god and therefore endowed him with the greatest strength of flesh and bone, together with the quiet cruelty of an immortal. At a glance, he seemed an old man, for his blond, sun-faded hair made a silver contrast with the ingrained and weathered darkness of his skin. He was not above middle height, but seated on the rowing bench, with only the weight of his shoulders and the flowing power of his long arms visible, his bearing still made him seem loftier than his fellows.

Except for a single rag of cloth, he was as naked now as he had been three days before when he left the piece of wreckage and climbed like an active seabeast over the side of the canoa. Whatever his ship's name—and he was silent about it—he was the sole survivor. No doubt the vessel had been flying before the same hurricane that had whipped and staggered the *Mary Burton* across the Gulf of Mexico; no doubt it had smashed on the same reef that ruined the Bristol ship; but the light canoa, sliding over the teeth of the rocks that sank the *Mary Burton,* had picked up thirty of the crew of the big merchantman and

"She's getting her teeth ready for us!"

then, ten leagues beyond as the storm died, the sea gave them this single relic of a dead ship.

He had with him only one item from the wreck, and that was his rapier, which lay now on the floor of the canoa between his feet. For three days the long arms and the hard hands of The

Saint swayed an oar, while thirst whitened his lips and fixed the smile upon them, for the sea had spoiled the water which the canoa carried. In the three days he did not speak three words, but his silence and his labor and that sword between his feet had won the respect of his rescuers.

Even Captain Harry Dane, who commanded the canoa and to whom men were merely so many hands to level guns or to hold cutlasses, looked upon The Saint with a considering eye, and so did Harry Dane's crew. There were twenty of them and hardly two of one nationality, but all were strong, all were lean and fit for trouble as hungry cats.

If they were cats, one could imagine what mice they expected to catch at sea. In the reign of jolly Charles II, even the merest landlubber would have known what to think if he had seen, slipping among the islands or along the coasts of the Gulf of Mexico, a fifty-foot boat hollowed by fire from the trunk of one enormous tree, manned by a nondescript crew, with a single light cannon in the bow, and plentifully supplied with long-barreled muskets, pistols, knives, cutlasses, and axes. He would have said: "Here is a precious group of those sea-devils and man-quellers, the buccaneers —and God have mercy on my soul!"

These fellows had looked with wonderful scorn on the human driftage which they had picked from the waves. More than once, during the three terrible days of sun and thirst, they had seemed about to pitch the rescued back into the sea from which they had come; but now all the men in the boat, from the Mosquito Indian in the bows to the least of the men of the *Mary Burton,* were on their feet agape and staring. Some rubbed their dry throats, and some held out their hands as though to invite the mercy of heaven, and into the reddened eyes of all came a bright glimmer of hope. For over the edge of the horizon, blue as the sky but glinting with white like a cloud, loomed a big three-master, hull down, and laying a course well south and east of the canoa.

"Down, down!" shouted Captain Harry Dane. "And spring on the oars, every man of you. Maybe she means silks and wine for all of us and pieces of eight in every man's purse. Maybe she means that our voyage is made, but at the least she means a cask of water!"

Now their lives lay in the grip of their hands and the strain of their own backs. They bent the oars and set them groaning. They pulled with their heads dropped on their shoulders, their eyes blind, their lips stretched until they cracked to the blood, and the light canoa began to leap on the waves like a fish.

"Steady and easy!" roared Harry Dane. "She sights us! She turns to us! She changes her course! Elia, what do you make of her?"

The Italian left the sweep at which he was working and stood up to peer from beneath his hands.

"She don't sit down in the sea like an Englishman," he said. "Her sails are cut too loose and full to be a Frenchman. She's a Spaniard, *signore.*"

FROM fifty throats came a groan of misery. The rowing fell away to a futile splashing of the water. And The Saint, as he looked toward the blue-white sails of the stranger, leaned and gathered his rapier into his hand.

After that, he sat up again with his head lifted and the usual faint smile on his lips. A grown man might not have seen a difference in his look, but a child would have known enough to be afraid. The groan of the seamen, in the meantime, turned into a pitiful babbling of complaint. Only the buccaneers, those sea-cats, were silent, sharpening their eyes to study the stranger. For these were the days of Sir Henry Morgan, when a hundred years of hatred between England and Spain had come into a fine

and poisonous flowering, with special detestation blooming in the West Indies and along the Spanish Main. On sea or dry land, it was English dog to Spanish cat, and if the stranger made out that a majority of the men in the canoa were blond Englishmen, he was apt to give them bullets instead.

"Can we take her?" ran the murmur through the canoa. "Could we rush her and take her?"

For the Spaniard was not a fighting sailor. Spanish pikemen were the best infantry in Europe, but they were out of place on the swaying deck of a ship. They might fight with the greatest individual courage, but usually in a blind confusion. Mighty odds of Spaniards had been conquered by savage handfuls of sea-rovers.

But now as the stranger approached nearer, with a freshening wind to harden her sails, the men of the canoa saw long rows of gun-ports, and the masts climbed higher and higher into the sky. She was a great-bellied galleon with a crew of hundreds aboard her, no doubt, and massive ordnance behind those ports. She was of the style as dear to the Castilians as their mountain castles, with huge fore and afterworks towering above the deck. The portholes began to open along the near wall of the ship; a moment later a huge flag unrolled from the head of the mizzen, showing the colors of Spain.

"She's getting her teeth ready for us," said Captain Harry Dane. "Down with all the blondheads on board us. Down with 'em. Fall on your faces and stay there. Up, Juan Martinez, and talk for us."

A tall Spaniard rose in the canoa and stepped forward into the bows. Harry Dane, dark as a Latin himself and too handsome for any wench in a seaport to resist, remained beside the Spanish buccaneer.

"If there's a man on board who knows my face, I'll get a noose of rope instead of a swallow of water," said Juan Martinez. "But I'll try her. Haloo-o-o!"

A swarm of sailors had gone up into the rigging, and in the lower shrouds stood various gentry to look at the little vagabond of the sea which was rowing near them. As the hail of Martinez rang over the water a big, gray-headed man by the port bulwark of the galleon called in answer: "What ship are you?"

"The *Santa Elena* from Cartagena!" shouted Juan Martinez. "Eight days out and three without water or the mercy of God on the high seas."

The side of the ship rose like the wall of a house, sloping well back because the Spanish shipwrights believed in plenty of tumble-home. Their vessels rode high, answering their helms slowly and never making a point close to the wind, but though they tossed like corks, they were almost as unsinkable. Witness the great Armada, where the Spanish ships died on the rocks, but not under English guns.

The gray-headed captain bellowed back: "This is the *Santa Teresa*, of Cadiz, bound home, Captain Juan Ximenon—" He changed from Spanish to English, calling: "What is it you will have from me, my friends?"

The sound of that friendly language brought not one, but half a dozen hidden blondheads above the side of the canoa, shouting as with one English voice: "Water! Water, for God's sake!"

Captain Harry Dane turned on the fools with his cutlass like a bit of trembling white flame in his hand, but the harm was done already.

The Saint clearly heard Captain Ximenon say to the officers about him: "I thought I could smell English rats on our clean Spanish sea. Kindly sink that boat for me, Don Jose."

"Back water! Back water!" shouted The Saint, speaking almost for the first time in three days.

The men sprang back on the oars, cursing and wild with fear, for they

could see grinning Spanish faces inside the lower port-holes, and the busy aiming of the guns.

The Saint heard the word to fire, and the roar of the heavy guns was enough in itself, he felt, to knock the little canoa out of the sea. But a lucky wave at the right moment put its heaving shoulder under the side of the Spaniard and rolled up the muzzle of his guns, so that the shot merely tore overhead with a sound like rending sheets of canvas. Only one gun struck home.

The ball, smashing through the canoa from side to side, knocked one headless corpse overboard and left two other good men writhing in a red smother of blood. But now the way of the great ship carried her ahead and left the canoa wallowing under her stern, where only two cannon looked through the square portholes.

THEY had the helmsman in view, high above, pulling at the spokes of the wheel as the great ship commenced to wear, leaning with the wind, eager to pour in the second broadside. The Saint picked up one of the long barreled muskets which lay under the gunwales and shot the helmsman through the head.

"Well shot, by God!" roared Captain Harry Dane, as the strain of the rudder-chains spun the wheel back and let the ship straighten before the wind again. "Now get the gunners at those stern chasers. Joe Hatch—Gonzales—Johannsen—Mirza—some of you sharp eyes begin drawing beads and keep the hands off that wheel. If we can't fight her side to side, at least we may be able to hold her by the heels. Fight or die, damn you! Up hearts and down with the Dons. Watch the rigging. Help me tilt up the cannon!"

The men from the *Mary Burton* took little part in the fighting that had started, but the buccaneers fell to work—not with a cheer but with a frantic and savage yelling like a pack with the fox in sight. Chance had placed them, in fact, in exactly the strategic position. More than one great Spanish ship had been worried to death in just this fashion when there was not enough wind to let her maneuver out of the jaws of a small boat that hung on her traces and picked off the helmsmen as fast as they offered themselves at the wheel.

The buccaneers, men who had learned that it was either straight shooting or death in more than one battle, now steadied their fire through the portholes of the stern chasers until The Saint could see shadowy figures leap or fall beside the guns. And the helm itself could not be manned.

More danger came from the mizzen rigging, where a crowd of musketeers had climbed up to the fighting tops, and to the yards, from which they commenced to open a furious fire on the canoa. Five men died in the small boat almost at the first discharge, but Captain Harry Dane had already prepared an answer. For he had elevated the muzzle of the short, wide-throated cannon at the bow of the canoa and filled it to the mouth with a heavy charge of powder and musket-balls. Now the master-gunner, that Mohammedan renegade, Mirza, lay flat to sight the cannon. Now it fired. The recoil ducked the nose of the canoa almost under water, but a stinging shower of death whipped the entire mizzen. Men fell from their places like apples from a wind-shaken tree; and some hung helplessly in the rigging, screaming, while huge red stains dripped down across the sails.

Even the men of the *Mary Burton*, by this time, had learned the game. Battle was bred in their English blood and bone, for one thing, and after all, the trick seemed simple.

Now two men appeared high on the poop, dragging a sea-chest which they placed behind the wheel before the mus-

ket fire from the canoa dropped them. Two more brought a second chest.

"Watch them! Watch them!" shouted The Saint. "They're building a barricade for their helmsman!"

After the first shot he fired, he had reloaded his long gun and remained leaning on it, at wait for another emergency. It had come now; quickly leveling the musket, he brought down one of the two Spaniards and the second sea-chest was left on the deck. In that emergency, the captain himself, now equipped in a heavy steel helmet and body armor, ran up and laid hold on one end of the chest. The other end was grasped by a second man in armor, a magnificent youth with long, dark, curling hair that blew aslant in the wind. Between them, they swayed the sea-chest into place, and in this manner a barrier was raised behind which a helmsman could stand in safety. From every throat on the canoa went up a tingling screech of fear as the *Santa Teresa* swung with the wind, answering her helm.

The Saint stood by Captain Harry Dane.

"Dying on the *Santa Teresa* is as good as dying in the sea," he observed.

"It is!" agreed Dane. And as the yelling of his men died out, and only the cheering of the Spanish came roaring down the wind, he ordered the canoa right in against the stern of the galleon.

There was no wincing from that decision, for it was plain that in ten minutes of maneuvering with rudder and sails, the big ship was certain to bring a broadside to bear, and one volley would end the canoa. So, buccaneers and English sailors, they strained at the sweeps and brought the slender craft sweeping in under the high wooden battlements of the *Santa Teresa's* stern.

The Mosquito Indian buried his harpoon in the wood and lashed the two craft together, and the little tide of men washed up the lofty slope, catching at finger and toeholds. So, in a moment, they were up at the boarding neetings that screened the rear bulwark of the ship on the high poop. Made of tough rope woven in a net, hardened almost to metal by boiling in tar and pitch, the nettings could very nearly turn the edge of a chopping cutlass, but not the straight, short sword which Captain Harry Dane carried.

HE AND his men knew the system. On either side of him, men clung close and thrust with half-pikes at the faces of the Spaniards, while Dane cut through the nettings and opened a door to the deck of the ship, as it were. The Saint was the first man to step on the boards. He fell with his first step, as though a bullet had brought him down, and rolled in among the stamping feet of the Spanish. When he rose to his feet he had shortened the rapier and was stabbing at the bodies of those around him. That was how the entering wedge was driven, and buccaneers came flooding into the opened space.

There was much confusion on the Spaniard at this time, for while those on deck realized that the pirates had begun to board them, the men at the guns between-decks had only just heard that the ship was manned at the helm again, and they had barely begun to cheer the good tidings.

The gallant captain had rushed instantly to the point of danger with his long, straight rapier held above his head, shouting: "Santiago and St. James!" but a Maltese ruffian with one eye brained him, gilded helmet and all, with a single ax-stroke.

That made the Spanish recede in a wave and gained half the lofty poop for the buccaneers. What stopped them from sweeping it clear was the same brilliant youth in the half-armor who had helped to place the second sea-chest to shield the helmsman. He fought as

though he loved battle, and laughed as he swung a heavy Spanish broadsword. He nearly lopped an arm from the shoulder of an Englishman, and cut another through the brain-pan to the eyes. Behind him, the Spaniards began to rally fast.

The Saint, after his first entry into the battle and the first surge forward of the buccaneers, had slipped from the thick of the mêlée to observe matters from a little distance. This picture of the handsome Spaniard fighting like a hero seemed to please The Saint. He kept smiling with much more genuine pleasure than usual until he heard the muffled whine of trumpets beneath the deck and knew that the gun crews were being summoned away to meet boarders.

The time, therefore, was short; unless they swept the top deck of the *Santa Teresa* promptly, they would be worn down by fighting multitudes. The Saint slipped like a snake through the press, engaged the tall young Spaniard, and instantly had the point of his rapier through the right arm of that enemy. The broadsword dropped to the deck, and pressing in closer, The Saint struck his man between the eyes with the pommel of his sword. The big Spaniard fell on his face.

After that they won the entire poop —it was about a third of the entire length of the ship—at a stride, and stood forward looking down into the maelstrom which whirled without order in the waist of the *Santa Teresa.* All the forward works were black with men, who had opened a fire on the buccaneers aft.

Here that same Mohammedan devil of a Mirza took a hand. There were two small deck cannon mounted on the poop-deck, and these he turned down on the milling throng in the waist. Musket balls crammed those guns to the mouth, and the discharge of the cannon spread out the dead and the stricken in two fan-shaped patterns of red. The buccaneers came in behind this bloody stroke in a wave, shouting that the ship was theirs, and the Spaniards believed them. For just as every English sailor, in time of battle at sea, harked back to a thousand instances of invincible English valor, so very Spaniard that sailed the ocean could remember sad legends of defeat and disaster on shipboard, when it seemed that the hands of the saints were turned against them. These poor fellows, in a dreadful panic, turned and poured down the hatches to the safety of the lower decks, though they were not safe between decks, of course, for he who ruled the top deck controlled the brain of the ship.

In a few moments the waist was cleared, except for the dead and the screeching wounded, so that the Spaniards who manned the forward works found themselves cut off from the help of their companions. Of the Spaniards gathered forward there must have been five or six score, quite enough to change the course of the battle and sweep the buccaneers overboard, but already the taste of defeat was deep in their throats. The Saint sat with his arms folded, amidships, and watched the last of the defenders disappear through doors and windows.

Ten minutes after the attack began, the top deck of the *Santa Teresa* and the management of the great ship was in the hands of the buccaneers. There were on the galleon three hundred and seventy-five souls. At the moment of the attack, there were forty-three buccaneers able to bear arms. Yet they lost only seven more souls in boarding the *Santa Teresa.*

Tales of victories over far greater odds were in the mind of The Saint as he sat on the cask and listened to the screaming of the wounded, and then the pitiful complaints and the begging for mercy. The sight seemed to bother him more than the sound. He took tobacco from one dead man, a pipe from another, and

presently he was smoking contentedly, and looking out to sea.

CHAPTER II

SPOILS OF SPAIN

ALL was done according to old custom and unwritten laws. The wretched Spaniards, cooped in the dimness between decks, gave up to despair at once. When they were summoned on deck with their weapons, they came in droves to be disarmed, plundered to the skin, and returned below deck. A score or so were allowed liberty to become slaves of the new masters of the ship. They had to work the sails, wash the deck, and even help in carrying the loot into the waist of the ship, where the drinking already had begun. Two casks of brandy, two casks of red wine, another of white, had been broached. The more thirsty leaned and drank from the kegs and walked off, wine dripping over their wounded, naked bodies; presently all was gaiety and laughing carousal.

For the prize was very rich. Gold from South American mines and pieces of eight as fresh and bright as the morning, sewed up in little leather bags by the patient hands of Indian women, were heaped around the foot of the mainmast in an astonishing pile; and there was massive gold and silverwork done by native artists, particularly one twenty-pound golden bowl intended for the king's own table service. There were whole bales of lace and silk, caskets of cut stones, and bags of uncut jewels. As for the spices in the hold and the log wood from Campeachy and the rich paintings on the cabin walls and a thousand little treasures, the buccaneers left them all to be evaluated by the thievish merchants at Port Royal. Around the mainmast they heaped only the valuables whose worth they understood, and according to sea-law they commenced the division instantly.

It was at this point that The Saint turned on the chest and regarded the deck scene again. He became aware that except for one rag of cloth he was naked; for beside the heaped up loot, sat a blue-eyed girl, all golden shine and beauty like an Italian painting. The Saint yawned and drew again on his pipe. He began to clean his rapier, tardily, wiping it free of sticky blood with the greatest care.

Captain Harry Dane took charge of the procedure as one who knew all the sea-rules perfectly. He stood on a heap of bar silver, piled like cordwood on the deck, and called out: "In silver, the value of a hundred and fifty thousand pieces of eight. In gold, two hundred and forty thousand—"

A yell of delight from the buccaneers.

"In jewels, another two hundred thousand; in lace, silver and gold work,

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and odds and ends, fifty or sixty thousand pieces of eight. Afterward we have the sale of the cargo and the ship at Port Royal, but now we have six hundred and fifty thousand pieces of eight, or Harry Dane is a liar and never saw Lancashire. For the dead and living, fifty-one in all. Fifty-one shares to start with. Who says no to that?"

Mirza the Moslem said: "If you feed a bone to a dead dog, still it cannot chew the meat."

"It's the sea-law," said Harry Dane. "The dead share with the living. They've all left a mother or a father or a brother or a friend, here or there."

"Except Barto," called a voice.

"Right," said Harry Dane. "Barto was a beast and not a man. The sharks have him now, and we have his share."

This caused much laughter and good feeling.

The captain added: "Someone go forward and knock that grunting swine on the head."

A Spaniard lay by the foremast, sick with his wounds and groaning with every breath he drew. Elia, the Italian, went forward and struck him through the base of the skull with a short hand-axe.

The Saint continued to smile. He glanced toward the girl and saw that she had pressed shuddering hands against her face. He smiled again. And glancing off to the side, he marked where the brave young Spaniard lay, that officer who had fought so gallantly on the poop. He was propped against a coil of heavy rope. Dried blood streaked his face from the blow with which The Saint struck him down; but he had made a bandage to staunch the bleeding of his wounded forearm. His helmet was gone and his dark hair flowed back across his shoulders. Except for the bigness of his features, he possessed almost the beauty of a woman.

The Saint refilled his pipe and looked into the west at the low-lying green of an island; he narrowed his eyes to enjoy the beauty of it.

"Now for wounds, who speaks?" the captain was asking.

"Jack Martin lost a finger," said one. "A forefinger."

"That's two hundred pieces of eight," said Dane, readily.

"It's the only finger left on that hand," said Martin, calmly holding up the mutilated stump.

"Four hundred, then," answered the captain. "Who else?"

"A thumb," said someone, holding up the hand with the raw stump to prove his claim.

"A hundred pieces," said Dane.

"It's on his right hand," argued some one.

"True. A hundred and fifty pieces," said the captain. "Arms or legs?"

"Covetski has lost his left arm at the shoulder," said someone.

"Five hundred pieces," said the ready captain. "Wounds?"

"I'm cut through the calf of my leg," said one man.

"A cat scratched you, maybe," said Dane. A good, loud, brutal laughter followed this. "I mean, wounds that cut tendons or cripple a man?"

"I've lost half the end of my nose," said a thick voice.

"There's less of your face left to wash," said Harry Dane. "Who else? Nobody? Then who gets extra shares, beginning with your captain. Speak up, men."

"Ten shares for our captain," suggested someone.

"Too much," said another. "He did well, but ten shares is too much. Six shares is enough."

"Call it eight," suggested Dane, "and we'll save time and argument."

A general grunt expressed the assent of the crew.

"Who else gets extra shares?" demanded Dane.

"The Saint," said several voices,

"Will you bid for her, brothers, or does she go by lot?"

speaking together above the clamor.

"Right!" Dane agreed. "He drew the first blood for us, stepped on deck first, made room for some more of us, and dropped that Don Enrico, yonder, the junior captain of the ship. How many shares to The Saint? How many will you have, Saint George? Five?"

"As good as fifty," said The Saint. "It's all a man can carry about with him."

THEY rumbled and chuckled over this, and voted The Saint five shares on the spot. There were no others to claim extra rewards except Mirza, who received an extra half-share for his expert gunnery. There was a total, therefore, of just over sixty shares, and the loot already on hand would provide the enormous booty of some twelve thousand and more pieces of eight per man, the living

and the dead, except the poor dog Barto.

"Divide now," called the captain. "Here are the scales. But first there's one thing left over that's neither gold nor lace nor brandy nor wine. There it sits with the rest of the loot. Will you bid for her, brothers, or does she go by lot?"

"By lot," said several voices. "Everything by lot and by vote like true Brothers of the Coast!"

"Here's a bag of odd coins," said the captain. "Now I pass it around and every man takes one. The value of it doesn't matter, but the oldest date on it will give the woman to the lucky man. *Senorita,* what is your name?"

He stood over her, with his legs well spread, his fists on his hips, and his leering eyes fixed upon her, body and soul.

"I am Alice Morison," said the girl.

The Saint slipped from the chest and stood up. He gave her one glance and sat down again.

"That's an English name," said the captain, startled. "Are you English, my girl?"

"Yes," said Alice Morison.

The captain turned to Don Enrico, who watched with a high head, intently, all that went on.

"Is she English, in fact?" asked Harry Dane.

"She is English," said Enrico.

"Betrothed to one of the Spanish rats on the ship? Going to Spain for her marriage?" suggested Dane.

"English, unmarried, and unbetrothed," said Don Enrico. "Her father befriended my father in England; and so—"

"If she's English, she goes free, by God," called a hearty, drunken voice.

"No!" growled the chorus. "All the loot for all of us, and none held back."

"The vote's against you," said Harry Dane. "She goes to the man with the earliest date on his coin. Look, all of you, and sing out."

The Saint looked at his draw. It was a penny as bright and clean as the morning, and dated 1673. Then he heard the bawling voice of the one-eyed Maltese yelling: "I have it! 1589! Who has an older coin that that? Step aside and let me have her! Sweetheart, the look of you is better than cold beer in my throat. Lift your head, my lamb. There's only one eye in my face, and I'll swear it can see you better than any other man's two."

The Saint touched his arm.

"What'll you have?" snarled the Maltese, turning suddenly.

"I'll give this penny for that gold piece," said The Saint.

"Am I the fool, or are you?" asked the Maltese.

"You have the look, brother," said The Saint, smiling upon his man.

The Maltese was not a man to waste words and explanations. With one continuing gesture he pulled a knife from his belt and jabbed it back-handed at the naked belly of Saint George. There was no time to shrink to one side or the other or to give ground. The Saint attempted neither movement. He simply gripped the wrist as it jerked toward him and stopped the glistening point of the knife a half inch from his flesh. His right hand held the sword point at the throat of the Maltese.

"Brother," said The Saint, "if you are a wise man, you will see how much better this penny is than the gold piece. Gold is soft stuff and time will rub it away, but your good, hard copper will outwear half a dozen lifetimes. Will you let me buy it with the penny?"

"May your soul—" began the Maltese. But then he changed, adding: "Take the coin, and be damned. Does she go with it?"

"She does," said The Saint, and stepped cautiously out of range of the knife, with the gold coin in his hand.

A full-throated roar of laughter applauded this maneuver of Saint George,

but the Maltese, looking from the copper coin in his hand to the face of the girl, suddenly snatched a pistol from the belt of the nearest buccaneer. He managed to fire it, but he had the sword of Saint George through his throat before he could aim the gun. For the Englishman had caught his rapier close to the guard and flung it like a deadly little javelin, all flash and steel, and no haft. It ran right through the neck of the Maltese and he fell on his back. When The Saint calmly stepped to him and drew out the sword, the stricken man began to kick and twist and tie his body into knots, stifled by the flow of his own blood. He got to his feet and ran with his hands before him and his dreadful face across the deck. When he struck the rail, in his blindness, he toppled over the edge and they heard his body plump into the sea below.

"There is an extra share for the rest of you," said The Saint calmly, wiping his sword. "Why don't you give me a cheer, boys, for putting money in your pockets?"

THE buccaneers had regarded this fracas with unmoved quiet, merely admiring, in an impersonal way, the skill of The Saint with weapons. He was now washing the blood of battle from his body with a bucket of water, and having whipped off the wet with the edge of his hand, he picked out some clothes from the heap of finery which lay at the foot of the mainmast. He did not bother about shoes or stockings, but he drew on some linen and then stepped into a pair of black knee breeches with silver rosettes at the knees, and pulled on a plum colored jacket of velvet.

He was engaged in this manner, and then in combing his hair and viewing himself meticulously in a handmirror, as the captain said: "That was a good trick. He handled that sword the way a Mosquito Indian handles his fish spear. But I wonder if it wasn't murder? Let me have voices, brothers. Shall we thank Saint George for the dead man's share which goes to us, or shall we hang him up to the yardarm as a foul murderer?"

He posed the question with a most perfect indifference, and a general murmur answered: "Why, Saint George is a good fellow. We needed him in the attack, didn't we? He helped us then. And what was the Maltese except just another pair of hands?"

But there was a half-breed Portuguese called Juan Cedra, with enormous shoulders and the head of a child, and a complexion like unrefined molasses. He stood up and pointed a vast arm toward The Saint, saying: "If you like him, tell me who he is? He speaks French, Spanish, English, Italian. We took him naked out of the sea; we haven't even the name of the boat he sailed in. He came like the devil, with his sword and himself. I saw him when the shot smashed down three men and threw blood on him. He went on smiling. I saw him in the fight and he was still smiling. I say he may be the devil or the devil's servant. He may be a witch!"

The crew turned serious attention on The Saint for a moment, and he, stepping out in front of them with his pale hair and his dark face, still continuing to buckle the light rapier to his belt, lifted his head and turned that undecipherable smile upon his fellows.

"What am I, brother?" he asked. "Will you hang me?"

"Whatever else he is, he's a gentleman," said Juan Cedra, "and he's the only one among us. A good cutlass or an honest axe is right in the hands of most of us, for a fight, but he goes through like a wasp, stinging fighting men to death. He pricks you to death with a needlepoint. Hang him at the yardarm and see if the devil his master will break the rope! The Maltese was a very good man!"

Captain Harry Dane looked from The Saint to the girl and ran the tip of his tongue over his lips.

"Speak out, men!" he called. "How will you have him? In a hangman's noose, or a free man to use his feet and hands as he will?"

Mirza was pouring wine into his belly from a two-handled cup. He stopped drinking to say: "There are twenty score Spaniards on this boat. How many hands have we to keep them down?"

There was a general growl of assent to this.

"You're a free man, then," said the captain to The Saint. "But mind you, we're watching both your hands. Keep them out of hellish work."

The Saint drew his rapier, saluted the captain, saluted his fellows right and left, and slid the blade home in the sheath again. He favored them all once more with his smile. Then he went to the girl and said: "Follow me!" and passed on aft, down the deck, spinning his hand and catching again the broad gold-piece which carried the profile of Philip II of Aragon.

At the lift of the quarter deck, he passed in among the cabins which were reserved for officers. The captain's cabin, as spacious as a tavern room, he did not pretend to, but entered a starboard cabin big enough for comfort, furnished in carved hardwoods, from the large bed to the writing table affixed to the wall. The port light let in a cheerful stream of sunshine on the rich hangings of the bed, and on a little square of a hunting tapestry that decorated the wall. The figure of a saint in painted stucco filled a little niche in the opposite wall. Of course all was in disorder, for the looters had been through the cabin and wrenched out the drawers of the cabinet, overturned chairs, pulled the drawer from the writing table, overturned mattress and bedding, and knocked a litter across the floor.

The Saint began to gather up this confusion from the rug, and as he jammed part of it into a drawer of the big chest, he saw that the girl had entered and was standing near the tapestry, watching him with great eyes. He went toward her at once, slowly, with his head back and that peculiarly inhuman smile. His coming pressed her with invisible hands against the wall. She grew stone-pale. Even her lips lost their color and became a faded purple.

The Saint, when he was close to her, paused, surveyed her for an instant, and then bowed and lifted from the floor a handkerchief.

"You dropped this," he said, and she took it in her blind, trembling hand.

The Saint turned away to the table, saying: "I'll leave you here. You see the room ahead needs some attention? Afterward I'll come back to see how you are. And here is something to keep you company."

He laid on the table a small pistol, but with a bore so large that it promised a deadly discharge. Then he left her, while the bewilderment was still in her face and the color had not yet returned.

CHAPTER III

"BOARDERS AWAY!"

THE *Santa Teresa* sailed softly on toward far-off Port Royal, while the revel in the waist of the ship ran higher and higher. In spite of the warm weather, some of the buccaneers could not help loading themselves down with finery. They buttoned themselves into velvet longcoats, crammed their calloused, swollen feet into shoes, and put on be-laced and be-ruffled shirts, each worth half a year of their ignorant labor. There were not three thoroughly sober men on deck, and yet a full two score of Spaniards were at hand to manage the sailing of the ship.

The Saint found Captain Harry Dane

drinking wine out of a golden chalice and said at his ear: "Call 'treachery' and 'to arms', and see how many of our fellows can stand!"

Harry Dane stood up and bellowed: "Boarders away! . . . Treachery! . . . The ship's lost. . . ."

Twenty men, perhaps, gained their feet, and most of these were staggering; the rest merely stirred uneasily in their drunken oblivion.

Harry Dane flung the golden cup away with such violence that it clattered over the deck and into the sea. A Mexican who loved his art had spent a year in the shaping of that chalice.

"You're right, Saint George," said Harry Dane. "We'll have to get drunk watch and watch, instead of being drunk all together. Throw that bucket of water over me to wash some of the haze out of my brain. Mirza, get up, you pig. Send the devil out of your wits and be a man. Here's a rope-end for you. The next man that drinks himself stupid, lay the rope on him till he bleeds! Who's aft to keep the helm? If we sail at random, the only port we'll ever make will be the mouth of hell. Now, hearty my lads, rouse up the sleepers. Douse them with water! Roll them down the deck. Beat the sense back into them. Swine are no sailors!"

Those who could stand began to torment the sleepers at once, and buckets of salt water in five minutes had spoiled a thousand pounds' worth of finery. In the midst of that gambol, The Saint returned to the cabin and tapped at the door.

"Who is it?" called the girl.

"It is I," The Saint answered.

A silence answered him for an instant; then he heard the inner bolt being drawn. The door opened. She stood away from it, watching him with big eyes and her pale, intense face. She kept one hand behind her, and the pistol was no longer on the table.

"If you're afraid," said The Saint, "I'll stay away longer. But you should not fear an Englishman, even at a time like this."

"It's not fear of you," she said. "It's a sickness of dread that won't leave me. . . . Come in. Take this chair in the sun, and then if I can thank God and you for—"

"Don't be a silly child," commanded The Saint. "How old are you?"

"Twenty-one," she said, frightened again.

"Look at me," said The Saint. "Am I a Spanish cat or an Englishman?"

"An Englishman," she answered.

"Then be ashamed to be turning red and white all the time," said The Saint. "You're as safe with me as though you were my sister. . . . No," he decided, "that's a lie. Every man is a beast. If you were to look askance at me and smile; if you were to use half the everyday manners of the ladies of Whitehall, God knows what would happen. But

in the meantime, I am your servant."

He managed to bow to her without rising.

"God bless you," said the girl, with tears in her eyes.

"God never has," said The Saint, "but perhaps you have His ear."

SHE looked up suddenly and crossed herself.

"Tell me a little about yourself," he said. "First let me give you this assurance: When we reach Port Royal, I'll see that you're kept as safely in that hell-hole as a jewel in silk until I put you on a good ship for England. But tell me, first, what sort of a person you are. Open the door and come outside. It's a lovely evening."

She folded her hands together and looked down at them.

"You feel it's your rôle just now to be overcome by the fighting and the bloodshed that you've seen," said The Saint. "But don't plague yourself with the desire of all women, which is to be what they think the world expects of them. They put on a dozen faces in a day and are so busy arranging their features this way and that, that they have no brains or time left to speak with. Isn't that true?"

"I think there *is* truth in it," said the girl.

"As a matter of fact, why can't you relax altogether? In the hands of buccaneers, you're safer than you ever were in the hands of the Spaniards."

"Safer?" she cried, amazed.

"For a Spaniard," said The Saint, "is the favorite contrivance of the devil. The Spaniard walks like a man, talks like a man, breaths and eats and sleeps like a man, but still there's no humanity in him."

"Do you think the Spanish are mere beasts?" she asked.

"There was an Englishman once in the town of Seville," he said. "Do you know the saying: 'Heaven, or Seville in April?' . . . The Englishman was there in April, and he spent his days in a prison, with his body tied so that he couldn't move, and all of one day water dripped on his forehead until it seemed to beat the flesh away, and eat through the bone, and get at the brain. At last he went into a raving madness and screamed and said a good many foolish things and a good many shameful ones. I think he begged for his life. I think he promised to recant. . . . And when he escaped with his life, he promised himself to hate the Spaniards the rest of his days, to spend the rest of his years hunting down the Spanish as a cat hunts down fat mice. Do you understand?"

"You are the man?" she asked, watching him with parted lips.

"If I could see them wiped from the face of the earth—" he mused. "The most wretched slut in London streets is a sacred creature compared with the finest lady that ever watched an *auto-da-fe* in Spain. The meanest English beggar is a saint compared with the most glorious nobleman in Spain. You are a child and cannot understand these things as they are."

"No," she said, shaking her head and speaking faintly. *You* were tortured by them?"

"I think, in fact, that you don't hate them at all," said The Saint. "You're rather fond of them, aren't you? Their soft manners, and their dignity, and all that? And that fear which is still in the back of your eyes—is it on account of some Spaniard on the ship?"

She was silent, staring at him.

THE Saint nodded, and then he laughed and leaned back in his chair a trifle.

"A romance!" he said. "I can see it. And of course a Spaniard would love you, as he loves a roast of little singing birds. A delicate body with room for a great heart in it. Blue eyes of the sort that could weep great tears. Ah,

but a Spaniard would enjoy wringing the happiness out of your soul. He would take years to do it, and enjoy the taste to the last morsel. And yet on this very ship, I saw today a man that seemed worthy of almost such a woman as you. The young man, the tall fellow with the long hair, and the beautiful dark face. *He* fought like a brave man."

"Enrico Morello?" cried the girl, suddenly. "Don Enrico?"

"So?" murmured The Saint, leaning forward in his chair and resting his elbows on his knees as he watched her. "Is *he* the man?"

The girl could not speak, but her lips kept trembling with words which she was afraid to utter.

"Don Enrico, tall and proud, Don Enrico, noble and true?" said The Saint, smiling his smile. "What will you say if I promise to be kind to him, with his wound and all? Will that make you happy?"

She was out of her chair and on her knees in front of him before he could rise. She had her hands crossed on her breast and her head raised and her eyes melting like some Italian painting of an adoring angel.

"Ah, but will you? My kind, my generous—"

"Stuff and nonsense," said The Saint, shrugging his shoulders and then lifting her to her feet. "Don't be hysterical about him, even if you love him. I made you a half-promise before. I'll make it a whole promise now. I'll do what I can to keep him out of trouble."

She caught his hand in both of hers and bowed over it. He snatched the hand away.

"Come, come!" said The Saint. "That's not very English, is it? As a matter of fact, there was something damned manly and heroic about that Don Enrico when he was fighting. He looked like a statue of a hero, and that's why I'll help him. . . . But tell him not to be a fool and weight himself down with helmet and armor. Speed, speed is the thing!"

As he spoke, he made a few slight motions that flowed from foot to hand, as swift as the striking of a cat's-paw and the subtle shoulder movement that goes with it.

"Truth is," said The Saint, "I saw him step in and stand over one of his men who had fallen, and sweep aside three cutlasses that were about to cut him to the teeth—"

"He would always risk his life!" cried the girl. "When I was only five, I remember how he snatched me away from the bull. I still can see the gilded horns of the bull and hear the people shouting—"

She stopped herself, as though suddenly her breath had deserted her. The Saint, with his head back and his ironical smile, continued to watch her.

"It's no sudden romance," he said. "You've known him since you were children, eh?"

"His father . . . . a friend of my father," she said. "And they would visit us, you see."

"His father, taking the little boy into a land where people would *eat* Spaniards, if that were the only way to get rid of them," commented The Saint. "Brave father, brave son! And gilded horns? Gilded horns, did you say?"

"There was a country fair," said the girl.

"I can see the white of the lie in your face," said The Saint. "Saved when you were five—and a bull with gilded horns, and people shouting—. What were they shouting? *'El Toro? Bravo el toro!"*

She went back from him until her shoulders were against the wall.

"Don't do that!" exclaimed The Saint. "Don't look as though I've laid a lash on you. . . . It was this Don Enrico who said you were an English girl. What is he? Your husband?"

"He is my brother," she whispered.

"I can believe it," said The Saint, slowly. "Except for the different color, it's the same sort of rare beauty. Except that there's courage in him, and in you there's only—a Spaniard!"

She put her handkerchief to her mouth and swallowed. The Saint drew in a breath through his teeth.

"A sweet little blue-eyed English girl, as safe with me as a sister. Bah!" he said. "I'm half a thought from putting hands on you. Whatever's clean in the world turns foul when it's near a Spaniard. But I made you a promise to see to this Don Enrico, and promises are things that I keep—better than I keep money!"

He turned on his heel and left the cabin.

When he reached the deck, he saw Captain Harry Dane standing with arms akimbo, looking over the world which he had so greatly mastered that day.

"Was it a charm, that gold coin?" asked Harry Dane. "Is she already smiling and happy?"

"Charm? In this?" said The Saint.

He took the golden coin and spun it into the air. Where it fell he did not look to see, but walked on, slowly. Captain Harry Dane picked up the spinning little glitter of yellow and laid it flat on his palm. The date was 1589, and the heart of Harry Dane spun in a flickering as dizzy as the spinning coin a moment before. He was not a man to wait for his fortune when it was in his hand; he turned at once and went to the girl's cabin.

CHAPTER IV

QUARRY

THE SAINT went forward, climbed the great square forecastle, strong as a tower, and stretched himself on the deck, where the heave of the sea swung him as in a windy hammock. There, lying face down, he fell asleep instantly. The wind blew almost a storm without wakening him. The night stilled. The dew fell and drenched him. Still he slept until in the small hours of the morning he roused at last, yawned, stretched, and got at once to his feet.

They were sailing over an easy sea, with the yards braced up a trifle and those clumsy Spanish sails rounding out their bellies in the wind. In the whole build and sailing of a Spanish ship there was something middle-aged, soggy, far removed from clean-limbed and active youth.

Looking aft, he saw that devil Mirza at the wheel, and a dozen of the Spaniards here and there, ready to receive orders for the handling of the sails; but the wind was so steady and the course so easy that not a rope had to be touched, hour after hour. Now and then the great latten yard on the mizzen swayed with some motion of the ship and uttered a deep, human, groaning sound. In the waist, aft of the place where two of the boats of the *Santa Teresa* stood in chocks, lanterns were lighted, in defiance of the law of the sea, and here a round dozen of the buccaneers were gathered with the towering bulk of Captain Harry Dane among them.

They had been playing cards, which still were scattered around the edges of two tarpaulins. But now they had a far more interesting occupation, which was the torment of a poor devil of a Spaniard, whom they had triced up by the thumbs. One man swung a rope's end and with it flogged the prisoner across the naked belly. Every few strokes, when he paused, Harry Dane stepped closer to ask a question, but the Spaniard, apparently, was obdurate. And the flogging recommenced.

The Saint went down into the waist and, when he came close, saw that it was Don Enrico whom they were torturing. The wound in his right arm,

where the sword of Saint George had stung him, had opened again and let a red stream all down his side; and the rough of the rope's-end had torn the flesh about his stomach. But even now, as the rope fell on him again and again, the face of Don Enrico remained not convulsed with a manly effort to endure pain, but perfectly calm and still. He looked up as though, like a good sailor, he were studying the leech of the sail and watching the wind.

The fellow who swung the rope's-end flung it down and stood back with an oath.

"Some one else take it," he said. "I've tired my back swinging it, and the dog of a Spaniard pays no attention to it."

"Ah, brother!" said the captain to The Saint. "I picked up the coin you threw away and tried to pick up the girl along with it, but by God she put a pistol under my nose and would have fired it, too, to judge by the way she showed her teeth. I talked to her as I never talked to a woman before, but I could not budge her. She acted like a cold saint or a fool in love. So I asked her, and she said it was true. She loved whom? Why, she loved The Saint! You!"

. . . *Hard and cold and edged like Spanish steel* . . .

"Did she say she loved me?" asked The Saint, with his smile.

"She swore it. And of course I could not bear down on her if she belonged, body and bones, to a shipmate; but I thought when you threw the coin on the deck that you were throwing away your part in her also."

The Saint said nothing. He continued to look, with interest, on the upturned, stony face of Don Enrico, and the powerful muscles which robed the wounded body.

"We found out from one of the Spaniards," said Harry Dane, "that we had missed one prize worth half the rest of the cargo—a little bag of pearls which this Enrico Morello had on board. So we're asking him, patiently, where he may have put it. As you see, he won't give us an answer. Can you suggest another way of tormenting him? We have tried twisting a knotted rope around his head, but even when his eyes were starting out, and the knots began to cut through the flesh into the skull, he still would not speak."

Slivers pushed under the nails and then lighted, they are very good things," said The Saint. "In Spain they are much

used, I believe. But this man is about to die, and that will end the torture and the pearls at one stroke."

"About to die?" said Harry Dane. "A third of our profits would die with him, undiscovered! Cut him down, Teobaldo! The Saint says that the scoundrel is trying to cheat us and take his pearls to hell with him."

THEY cut down the Spaniard and would have allowed his loose, helpless body to fall unregarded to the deck, but The Saint stepped in and took the weight of it over his shoulder. The plum-covered velvet coat, already a-streak and awry with the wet of the dew, now was bedabbled with the blood of the Spaniard, as The Saint carried Don Enrico aft and into the confusion of an unused cabin. There he laid the body on the bed and stood for a moment looking down into the grim eyes of Don Enrico. The Spaniard said:

"Why did you stop them, *señor? You* knew that there was still plenty of life in me. But they might have ended it for me then, instead of taking it in parcels later on."

The Saint lifted the head of the Spaniard; from a bottle of cognac he poured a big dram down his throat. Enrico Morello coughed, gasped, and then lay back on the bed with heightened color and a more living eye. The Saint left the cabin and entered the galley, where he found a very surly cook.

"How are you, brother?" asked The Saint.

"Not as well as you," said the Spaniard. "For I haven't a new skin."

Even buccaneers could not daunt the spirit of this independent fellow. The Saint asked for hot water.

"There it is on the fire," said the cook. "And you have a sword to take it, or else I would give it to you with my own hands till you were stewed like a fish."

The Saint therefore mixed a bucket of warm water and carried it back to the cabin where he had left Don Enrico. He brought some lard also, and after he had washed the wounds he eased them with the grease and with torn strips of cloth made bandages. Another swallow of cognac left the Spaniard even able to smile.

"Why have you taken this care of me, friend?" he asked.

"Perhaps because there's no point in torturing a man about to die," said The Saint. "Perhaps to save you for some clever hands to work on tomorrow."

Don Enrico shook his head and smiled at the ceiling. It was an after-cabin, looking directly out on the streaming wake and the ship's boat that towed there, wavering from side to side in the moving current. The moonlight struck through this large, squared port aslant, moved on the floor as the *Santa Teresa* swayed with the waves.

"My friend," said Enrico Morello, "if they had not your sword, they would never have carried the ship. But now I think you are half sorry that they won. Yet it was barbarous for the big guns to fire into the canoa. Whatever your mind may be, will you tell me how it is with the English girl?"

"She has a cabin to herself, and a pistol to keep her alone," answered The Saint.

"Ha?" asked Don Enrico, lifting himself on his elbows.

"I am the only man among our people who knows, at this time, that she is your sister," said The Saint.

Don Enrico, after staring for a wild moment, lowered himself again on the bed.

"Do I understand you?" he asked.

"You do not," said The Saint. "If I've helped you, it was not for her, but because I wanted to know how you could endure the strokes of the rope's end without howling." He pointed to the black, swollen thumbs of Morello and asked: "What did you keep in your

mind when the pain was the worst?"

"I kept seeing the blue Mediterranean through garden trees," answered Don Enrico. "I heard my mother's voice singing in the shade, and saw the bald head of the priest shining in the sun, and I felt the hand of Alicia holding mine; as though we were children again. It seemed to me that I had had happiness enough, and even if they lingered me out for a month, I still would be glad of having lived."

"You lived in the south of Spain?" Near Barcelona? Near Seville, perhaps?" asked The Saint.

"Our winter house is on the pitch of the slope near The Alhambra," said Enrico Morello.

"The blue face of the Mediterranean," mused The Saint. "The trees, the garden. And there was once a bull with gilded horns, eh?"

"Did she tell you about that?" murmured Don Enrico, smiling again. "That *was* a near thing to dying!"

The Saint went to the open port and leaned there, smelling the sea and watching the red stain of the ship's lantern from above entering a mist which had thickened until the boat astern was no more than a sliding shadow behind them. The moonlight was gone from the cabin and only the yellow, trembling flame of a wall-lamp illumined it.

He left the cabin and tapped at the door of the girl. When she heard his voice she pulled the door ajar, slowly, letting the pistol look out at him beside her frightened face.

HE was angered. He said: "Put the damned, silly pistol away, will you?" And before she could move, his hand flashed like a cat's-paw and snatched the gun away.

"Now be in another panic," said The Saint, gloomily, as he stepped into the room. "Or take a deeper breath and get better sense in you. The pistol is only a token, and tokens do very well with a brute like the captain, but there are other men to whom the token is worth nothing. Senorita Alicia, stop cringing in the corner like an eight-year-old baby and step out to speak to me like a woman to a man."

She glanced toward the saint in the niche and stared at The Saint in the flesh before she came slowly out to him.

He took her in his arms, and though he held her as lightly as a thought, he felt her body shudder.

"You anger me, Alicia," he said.

"I know that I'm only a Spaniard to you," she answered.

"And therefore—?"

"And therefore I'm afraid."

"You see, my dear," said The Saint, there's enough beauty in your face and loveliness in your body to drive any proper man half out of his wits, but there's also such a combed and brushed and washed and handled look, that I see a whole procession of tutors and governesses and dancing teachers and riding masters fading away behind you, and the shadow of your mother's hands is never done blessing you—"

"Yes, *señor,*" she said.

"Is there any sense in that sort of an answer?" he asked.

"No, *señor,*" she said.

"Now, you see, I'm holding you closer," said The Saint, "but in spite of that you will repeat after me: He is my friend in whom I place an absolute trust!"

The Saint, having ended, waited for a moment, looking at the dim swirling of the mist beyond the port. When he had no answer, he became suddenly aware that she was looking up to him, silently. Something in the gravity of her face amazed him. He could not read her expression at all.

"I cannot say it," she answered.

"You cannot?" asked The Saint, turning cold as steel.

"I cannot say it," she answered. "And

it is not because I am a damned Spaniard."

"It is because, instead, I am a damned Englishman? You cannot say that you place a perfect trust in me?"

"No, my friend. It is not enough," she answered. And he became aware, suddenly, that the mystery behind her gravity was no less than a smile. Such a smile, in all the days of his life, The Saint never had seen before, there was such sweetness and mockery in it, such scoffing and affection, such carelessness and mastery.

He tried the word again in his mind and found it perfectly apt. Mastery! In fact, she looked upon him with such an air of hidden amusement that he became a little child again, dimly remembering the detestable snickering of half-grown girls, with voices rattling together like toys.

Bewilderment swept over the mind of The Saint. He drew back from her the third part of a step.

"It is plain that you now are without fear of me," he said.

"Yes, *señor,* I am without fear," she said.

He could not help looking past her, almost as though he expected a row of armed servitors to be standing there, sword in hand. It seemed to him that her surety could not be based upon a smaller security than that.

"And the change is sudden," he said.

"As sudden as a stroke of lightning," she said.

"I am relieved," he said, stiffly.

"No, *señor.* You are angered," said the girl.

"Angered?" he replied.

"It is easy for one of a base nation to anger you," said the girl, still irrepressibly smiling. "How can you be near a proud, cruel, subtle, devilish, wicked Spaniard without anger and without reaching for your sword, as you do now."

"I was not reaching for it," said The Saint, gnawing upon his nether lip. "I was merely resting my hand upon it."

"Alas, *señor,* I have wearied your very hands," said the girl. And she laughed again. "But I anger you more and more and I shall not speak again."

"You anger me in a strange way, Alicia," said The Saint. "There is anger, and a certain deliciousness, also. Like a sour wine, cold and old and perfect. As for the Spaniards—"

"They are beasts," said the girl, "and I would not have you think of them."

"In the name of God," said The Saint, "will you tell me what you have in mind?"

"I cannot," she answered, taking possession of his eyes and searching into them with a miraculous impertinence.

"Why can you not?" he asked.

"Because you stand too high above me," she answered.

A vague and sudden glimmer of understanding came upon him, and he fell on one knee before her and held up hands which almost but not quite touched her.

"Am I low enough now?" he asked. "Alicia, what is in your mind?"

"You are too far beneath me, now," she said, laughing again. But she came closer to him and took his face between her hands, running her fingers over the sun-faded, close-cropped hair, now like silver in the lamplight and against the darkness of his skin.

A sort of agony broke into the voice of The Saint as he cried to her: "Alicia, you don't know me. I am a man who has—"

"—sailed the seven seas and fought men and loved women and hated Spaniards, and stormed the high decks of the *Santa Teresa,*" she said.

He closed his eyes, but he could feel her bending above him. He tried to draw her to him, but his hands would only touch the silk of her dress.

He thought to himself: "She is but a baby. I must not. . . ."

And then he knew that he had uttered the words aloud, softly.

"But these Spaniards are such deceitful creatures and so dangerous that you cannot tell about them," said the girl. She kissed him. "And in fact there are enchantments which only the Spaniards know. Deep and desperate wiles and stratagems." She kissed him again. It was indeed like an enchantment, for joy held him stone-still.

"This is a great, strong spell which my mother taught me how to weave," she said. "And her mother learned it from her mother, and she from her mother. It is not yet complete. If you wish to save your soul from a dark bondage, *señor*, spring to your feet and flee from me, or else, surely, I shall have your soul forever."

He could at last look up to her and he began to laugh, a sound so strange on his lips that he himself was amazed by it.

CHAPTER V

BOOTY FOR ENGLAND

AFTERWARD, he took her into the after cabin to her brother, and closed the door quickly. But the thin edge of her cry of joy still went like an invisible sword through and through him. He was still standing there, listening to the inarticulate, happy bubbling of the voices when he sensed or felt or heard something stir behind him.

He re-acted to it with a sudden step that took him across the passage way, and the broad blade of the cutlass fell past his dazzled eyes like a cataract of water, and he saw the convulsed face of Mirza with the lips grinned back from the teeth with the effort of the stroke.

The time was too brief and the space was too close for the drawing of a sword. The Saint used his hands instead. He jerked an arm around the neck of Mirza; behind the Arab's head he caught his own projecting wrist with his left hand, thrusting up with his shoulder and pulling down against the leverage of his arm at the same instant, so that the chin of Mirza was forced violently back. And into the small of Mirza's back, at the same moment, The Saint jammed his knee as he leaped on his man.

A bone cracked, distinctly, a dull sound and a jarring sense, as though a small stick were wrapped in soft cloth and broken between the hands. Mirza spilled upon the floor. It was not like falling. His head dropped between his knees.

When The Saint tried to lift the body, he could hear bone-ends gritting together.

He pulled Mirza into the next cabin and stretched him on the floor. The man was in such agony that he rolled his eyes back into his head, and through his set teeth a froth sucked in and out with his breathing.

"Why, Mirza?" asked The Saint.

The Arab gave him one glance of hate and rolled his eyes up again.

"Who sent you?" asked The Saint.

He had no answer, and for a moment, silently, he watched the sweat of pain form and run on the face of Mirza. Then he picked from his belt a small dagger which he had picked up on the ship, a mere thorn of steel, sharp as a thought.

This he held above the eyes of Mirza, the hilt down, keeping the danger of the blade delicately between thumb and forefinger.

"Who sent you, Mirza?" he asked. "Or was it your own thought?"

The eye of the Arab looked on that release from pain with enormous hunger. He reached a slow hand up toward it.

"Harry Dane . . . he hates you . . . the girl . . ." said Mirza.

The Saint put the hilt of the dagger into that fumbling hand; then he left the cabin; and as he closed the door behind him, he felt rather than heard the blow strike home against the hollow of the chest. Mirza had left pain far behind him.

IN THE after-cabin, he found the girl still on her knees beside the bed of Don Enrico. They held hands and laughed together softly, as though they were afraid that God himself would envy their happiness.

The Saint filled his pipe and lighted it. He sat back to content himself in the midst of a cloud of his own making.

"On this ship," he said, "an hour ago I seemed to be at least the second man on board. Now I'm one of the least. The captain has begun to hate me and wants my blood. The three of us must leave the *Santa Teresa*."

He puffed on the pipe again through a silence.

"Let us pray a little first," said the calm voice of the girl, "if we have to walk the waters afterward."

"Those pearls of yours are simply a lie and a legend on the ship that the sailor betrayed you with?" asked The Saint.

"They are not a lie. There is a great double-handful of them," said Don Enrico. "They are in a hollow panel at the left of the door of the second cabin forward. But are you telling me, my friend, that you, who led the attack and were the edge of the knife they drove home through us—that they are denying you now?"

"I have spent too much time away from them, since we gained the ship," explained The Saint. "So I have become a mystery. The sheep in the next field has become a wolf. Besides, the captain has a special reason for hating me."

He went into the forward cabin. His tapping fingers located the hollow panel at once and he smashed it with a blow of the sword-butt. From within the niche, he took out a bag of soft leather. Stones of an oily smoothness rolled inside the leather beneath the tips of his fingers. He carried the treasure back to Don Enrico.

"It is here," said The Saint. "And now, hardly ten miles away through the mist, lies Havana off our port bow. Would an Englishman be safe there under the conduct of Don Enrico?"

"But the governor is a dear friend!" Don Enrico cried.

Here a hand beat at the door. The Saint got to his feet. From the table he picked up a horse-pistol and stuffed it into his belt.

Three half-drunken buccaneers came crowding through the door.

"What is it?" asked The Saint.

"The Spaniard," said one of them. "We'll take him back now, and try some new devices on him. And the woman's no more than his sister, Saint George. A damn Spanish wench with Spanish lies in her throat—and you so soft with her."

They laughed in his face.

"We'll use our hands on Don Enrico in the morning," said The Saint. "There's so little life in him now that one squeeze would put an end to him."

"We have the captain's order, and by God, we'll bring him," said a fellow with greasy moustaches adrip from his face.

The Saint played with the horse-pistol.

"In the morning, brother. In the morning," he said.

It seemed for an instant that they would rush him. But one said: "Why should we be the only ones clawed by the tiger when there are thirty more to help us? Let's tell Harry Dane what the high gentleman says!"

They went out of the cabin in a rush of revengeful eagerness.

The Saint, turning to the white-faced pair, said to them: "There's a boat towing astern. Here!"

He leaped into the port, reached far out, and pulled down the tow-line.

"Hold this," he directed, giving it into the hands of the girl. "We need a little time, and I am going out to get it. In the meantime, the two of you slide down the rope and get into the boat astern. There's a small mast in it. Rig the mast

and have the sail ready. *Adieu* for a moment—."

"Wait!" cried the girl, as he reached the door.

He waved to them and spilled from the bag of pearls enough to cover the palms of one hand. Then he went out, hearing Enrico say: "There are only moments to act in. There is no time for explaining. Do as he says—"

By the time The Saint reached the waist of the ship, he saw a full score of the buccaneers gathered about the lights at the foot of the mainmast, figures gross and dim in the mist. Even the voice of Harry Dane, haranguing them, seemed to be blurred by the thick weather. And then, as he came nearer, someone cried out: "The Saint! He's with us!" and the speech of the captain ended.

THE SAINT walked straight on with his head high, and his smile from old Egypt. On either side faces turned savagely toward him, and he had a sense of hands reaching for weapons, or lifting as though they would strike him down. It was the running of a gantlet, and if he paused or lost face for an instant, he knew that he would be lost. So he moved steadily, with that high head, until he was before Harry Dane.

The captain, giving up all pretense of friendliness, folded his arms and said in a loud voice: "I send for a damned Spanish prisoner, Saint George, and you drive the men away from you. Are you turning into a Spanish rat yourself?"

"I've an answer here in my hand," said The Saint, lifting a hand high above his head, and turning his smile from side to side so that all of them might see it.

"Ten pounds to a shilling that The Saint faces the captain down," said a drunken voice, distinctly.

"In my hand! In my hand!" laughed The Saint. "For all of you to see. You talk of torturing the truth out of a man too weak to hold up his head—so weak that every breath he draws may be the last one, who would die under the torture before he could tell you what you want to know. But I, do you hear, have talked part of the truth out of him, and before the morning I'll know the whole secret!"

"To hell with words," said Harry Dane. "Let's see what miracle you've got in your hand."

"Look, then!" shouted The Saint; opening his hands gradually, he allowed the big pearls to drop out one by one.

The buccaneers stared with dropping jaws. Then they scrambled on the deck for the prizes.

"They're real! They're pearls!" came the shout.

The Saint turned and strode through them.

"And in the morning," he called, "I'll have the rest safely! Patience, brothers."

So he had almost gained the entrance to the quarter-deck when he heard Captain Harry Dane shouting: "He has them *now* in the pockets of his coat. Catch him, lads! Catch the fox before he makes fools of us all. A Spaniard! The girl has made a Spaniard of him!"

"A Spaniard! A Spaniard!" they shouted, and bare feet pounded over the deck toward The Saint.

He ran back down the passage, reached the aftercabin, slammed and bolted it behind him. The cabin, he saw with a leaping heart, was empty.

Already the pursuit crashed against the locked door as he leaped into the after port and saw, beneath him, the boat like a phantom in the mist and the towline swinging far out of his reach to one side. He leaped for it, gained it with arms and legs, and slid down the curving slack of it, until a voice shouted above him. He looked up, and saw that the helmsman had left his wheel and was poising an axe above the rope. He did not see the stroke, but the suddenly

loosened rope dropped him into the sea.

Perhaps that was as well, for even as he fell he heard the whistling of searching bullets over his head.

He came up not two arm-hauls from the edge of the boat and swarmed into it.

The lofty poop of the *Santa Teresa* already was fading, and through the tumult he could hear the voice of Harry Dane crying: "Give them the stern chasers loaded with musket balls! Man the first boat and over with her. We're losing half our prize, you fools—"

But when the stern-chasers spoke, the *Santa Teresa* had vanished behind a moon-whitened wall; and the hands of The Saint already were hoisting the sail on the mast which Don Enrico and the girl had stepped for him. The blowing fog filled the shoulder of the sail, and the little boat began to lean with the wind.

"You're steering wrong!" shouted Don Enrico. "Havana lies on the port bow—"

"And Harry Dane and the rest know it," said The Saint. "Take the tiller, Alicia. Don Enrico, wipe my sword dry while I trim the sheet—and God for Merry England, I'm a happy man this night!"

The wind was not fresh, but the small boat was a good sailer and the heads of the waves began to slap beneath the bows rapidly, sending small tremors of life through the craft.

"Hard a-port! Hard a-port!" screamed Don Enrico to his sister. "No, too late! Hold her head on—and God have mercy on our souls!"

The Saint, looking aside, saw an enormous shadow running upon them out of the mist, a figure so dim that it seemed no more solid than the darkness of a squall. He saw the round-cheek bows driving the sea like plunging white horses before them, and the heavy bowsprit with the little spritsail drawing above it, and the foremast leaning with its weight of canvas above the spring of the cutwater.

Right upon them drove the monster. He saw the anchors like black, misshapen teeth ready to strike down at them. And then the danger had run by them.

But another danger followed, for the yell of a lookout rang at their ears as the little boat began to pitch and rock in the bow wave of the *Santa Teresa.*

And then a cannon boomed, and another, and another; and a round shot ruled a brief line of white beside them.

Then silence, and the phantom was gone, and they saw no more of her.

But still they held their places tensed and crouched, and wishing the wind ever harder and harder in the sail as they drove on the course for Havana, until the mist above them thickened to milk, and then the stain of rose spread through it, and the daylight by degrees showed them to one another, smiling, but almost afraid of what they might see in one another's eyes.

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"Give it to me!" he cried, his voice brazen against death.

NO QUARTER

By Maurice Walsh

First part of five

IT WAS the second day of the sack of Aberdeen. And it was the first time that we were angry to the core. At Tippermuir we had been frightened and had fought as rats in a trap, but here in Aberdeen we were eager to bite hard and bite often.

We lived on anger, friends and enemies alike. For a beginning, a soldier of its Covenant garrison had wantonly shot down a drummer boy of ours coming back out of the town under a flag with one of our heralds. As a consequence our Captain General Seumas Graham, the great Marquis of Montrose, was angry and cold; his Major General, Alasdair Colkitto MacDonald, was angry and hot as flame; and our Highland and Irish fighting men were angry and grimly vengeful.

That drummer boy was not yet fourteen, and his mother, Sorcha MacNeill out of Ulster and head of my nursing staff, wailed over his pitiful still body for all the camp to hear. So the time was ripe for blood-letting, and we had the will and the means.

Aberdeen had a name for being at cross purposes with a strong cause or a strong man that it could hurt or that could hurt it, and it dealt and bore hurt with the same dour spirit. Here now, at last, it had chosen the right cause and the right man to the reaping of the full

harvest; for the cause was the cause of Charles the King, and the man was Seumas Graham, Marquis of Montrose.

Aberdeen despised the king for his vacillation as well as his episcopacy, and was eager to avenge itself on Montrose for the bloody comb he gave it away back in thirty-eight—sixteen hundred and thirty-eight to be exact—when he was a Covenanter and Aberdeen was not. And so, when our three thousand came fast marching up from Perth after the miraculous victory of Tippermuir, we found a Covenant army, four thousand strong, drawn up against us beyond the Dee; and the town close behind was buzzing like a wasps' bike.

Aberdeen was confident as well as angry. It remembered Harlow, where it had beaten the best of the Highland clans, and as for the wild Irishers, they were only mad dogs to be slaughtered. In truth, the Aberdeen burghers were so ready to cut our throats that they would not mind losing a finger or two in their hurry. But, for all that, whatever throat-cutting was done that day was done by the clansmen of the Highlands and of Ulster.

They drove in so sternly fierce that the Covenant line, five deep, gave way at the first push, and O'Cahan's Irish foot, with a few horse under that fine soldier of fortune, Nathaniel Gordon, actually broke a charge of cavalry, a thing that never happened before. They were hacking up the high street before evening, and Montrose left them to it. For the only time in his career he treated a taken town as taken towns have been treated since Troy fell. He turned his back and rode off to a friend's house, and Alasdair Colkitto's men had their own way with Aberdeen for three days.

I DID not go down into Aberdeen until afternoon of the second day. As a sort of half-surgeon, I was busy with the wounded. Some things that take place in captured towns, moreover, did not appeal to me. I went down then looking for my foster brother, Tadg Mor O'Kavanagh, to whom all things appealed. In three hours I found him with a mixed company of Clan Vuirich and Clan Finley in a drinking shop facing the harbor. There were women there too, our own as well as some Aberdeen hussies.

Tadg Mor had been in rags yesterday morning; now he had repaired his wardrobe uniquely. He wore a seaman's long boots big enough even for his great feet, a knitted blue body-vest up to his chin, a knitted cap that hung a red toorie over one ear, and a great leather stormcoat hanging to his heels. And every pocket bulged.

He was not more than half drunk, but that means little, for no quantity of the hardest liquor could make Tadg more than half drunk.

Sober he had an ironic humor and a warm temper, but half drunk he was the pleasantest man living, smiling ever to himself, laughing heartily at the poorest wit, singing songs of his own rhyming and of doubtful character, and refusing all quarrel unless hit hard in the face; and if I grew stern with him he wept.

He was a fine, tall, red-haired man with a long nose hooked at the end, and I do not think that Alasdair Colkitto himself was any stronger. He was and is the best man I ever knew. Let that writing stand.

He was glad to see me in his pleasant, strangely dignified, half-drunken way; his Highland friends shouted a welcome, and young Ranald MacKinnon, who was one of the few Clan Ranald men with us at that time, roaring a song in praise of his Mull of the Mountains, pushed a wooden mug of liquor under my nose, paused in the middle of a note to say hurriedly "Drink that, Martin Somers," and went on roaring his song in good tune. But Tadg Mor placed one great

hand round me, so as to make my ribs crack, and with the other waved aside the spattering mug.

"No, Ranald Ban," he shouted. "Drink goes to his head in one lep, and makes him limber in the tongue. I have heard him argue the point with an iron pot that had one leg missing and wouldn't stand up for him."

"You are coming home, mutton-head," I said.

He looked down at me, affection in his drunken blue eyes, and again crushed my ribs. "I know 'tis how you'd come looking for me, Maurteen, and I will go home or to the world's end with you when you say the word. But first you will drink one small mether with me, Maurteen boy. It is a new French wine, buzzing in the mug, and it lifts your head above the moon. Two new songs it has put in my head already and I will sing them to you on the road. There! Drink it up now, small brother."

I drank that big mether of wine because I knew I must, with Tadg Mor standing over me like a mother watching her bairn. The wine frothed over the brim of the mether, and I suspected from the taste that there was a strong lacing in it of that new liquor out of the Americas distilled from the sugar plant.

We forged for the door then, Tadg Mor shouting over his shoulder, "Drink while ye are able, my brothers, for tomorrow will be hell's sober day, with Seumas Beg Graham down on us."

Ranald Ban MacKinnon wanted to come with us, but Tadg Mor turned him back from outside the door.

"Whisper, Ranald, away! One or two of the Farkuharsons in there are looking crooked at three or four of the MacPhersons. If you are amongst them, 'tis yourself will get belted."

"I would like to see the weak one out of Badenoch that would cock his bonnet at me," said Ranald Ban, and went back into the inn.

"I like the peaceable way of doing things," said Tadg Mor, and we went off arm in arm.

IN FIVE minutes or less I found that I was no more sober than my foster brother. I knew that because my mind lit up and grew clearer than crystal, and I had a great desire, whilst that clarity lasted, to reason mysteries out for myself. I stopped Tadg Mor in the middle of the causeway.

"You will tell me now, Tadg Mor, the sort of the world's fool you made of yourself the last two days, and the reasons for it. And if you cannot tell me the reasons I will tell them for you, and if you are not satisfied I will belt you with the flat of your own sword from here to Bridge of Dee."

"Very fine and good enough!" agreed Tadg pleasantly. "And I will deserve the hardest belting you can give me, so long as you do not hit me on the nose. Come on now, *aviceen*, up this quiet lane and listen to me."

Whatever his lengthy discourse, I had forgotten it next morning, and only remembered that there was much bad logic in it. But sometimes, to make his point clear, he threw back his great head and bellowed a verse of a doubtful Gaelic song, and if the tune pleased me I joined in the chorus.

We had that narrow way to ourselves. The close-set gray houses were like houses of the dead, doors shut tight, windows barred and blinded, and never a a wisp of housewifely smoke from any chimney cowl; though, indeed, a small drift of gray smoke floated down the air from where houses still smouldered in the High Street.

No doubt, men frowned and women paled and children whimpered behind the barred windows, listening to Montrose's soldiers roistering up their lane; but, if they only knew, there was not a finger-nail of harm in us—most times.

We took a quiet way out of the town by a narrow twisting close that the fighting had not touched, and presently came amongst buildings that looked like schools, with tall narrow windows and patches of green lawn through round arches; and two pointed squat towers of red stone stood up against the evening sky.

And it was there we came upon a young woman, ankle-locked in the public stocks—an iron frame three feet off the ground with a narrow cross plank for seat and no back rest—outside the round arched door of a kirk of the stern God of the Covenant.

SHE was sitting forward, her hands lax in her lap, her head down, and her blown linten hair hiding her face. But when our feet struck the cobbles in the gateway her head jerked up, and she flung the hair out of her eyes with a fine womanly gesture.

"Mother o' God!" exclaimed Tadg Mor. "The people of this place breed a cruel marrow."

"There is reason in most things," said I. "Let you and I look into this one."

"I will look at the woman, whatever," said Tadg Mor.

And like two sedate judges we stalked side by side and slowly across the cobbled close. She sat stiff as a rod facing us, her hands across her breast and her wide-open gray eyes unflinching, but I noted that her shoulders were shivering and that her jaws were clamped to keep her teeth from chattering.

But the cause might be cold, not fear, for autumn evenings are harsh to the skin on that coast, and all that this woman had on was a white shift close at the neck and tied with a string at the ankles; and the strong, shapely bare feet of her, thrust through the cruel circles of the trap-bar, were blue and saffron.

Yet, still and all, what her eyes saw might well make her tremble. Tadg Mor in his looted garments looked as outlandish and as savage as a boar, a red stubble of beard all round his big hooked nose, and the basket-hilt of his broadsword thrust forward in the opening of his leather coat.

My appearance would be even worse, because I must look to be the more wicked of the two. Above the sound pair of shoes I had taken off a Lowland trooper at Tippermuir I was in rags, but my raggedness was little compared to my dark leanness and my long devil-slit chin that had not been shaved for three days; and the black eyes that damn me are the sort that seem to hide murder or worse, when they hide only dreams and the thought of a lark soaring.

Aberdeen booming and smoking below us, we stood swaying shoulder to shoulder looking down at her solemnly, and she sat straight, looking up at us, her eyes wide-open and unwinking.

"Wha be ye, ye drunken gangrels?" That was her greeting. Her voice was husky, and I noticed now that the whites of her eyes were streaked with red.

"We are two poor Irish soldiering men," Tadg Mor told her, grinning pleasantly.

"Not so," I protested. "I am an Englishman myself, and a sort of a surgeon."

"In a way that is true," agreed Tadg Mor weightily. "There is a small spark inside of him that is English, but in blood and bone and flesh he is Irish, and my mother's milk still wet in his mouth."

"Also," I went on reasonably, "some hold that I have Indian blood in me, for my father, God rest him, was in Virginia with Captain John Smith, and my mother I never saw."

"No man should miscall his father," reprimanded Tadg Mor, "for I have learnt to my cost that a man's father is a better man that his father's son, drunk or sober."

"That is a mixed saying, Tadg Mor,"

I said, "but I will think about it some other time."

The young woman looked from one to the other of us, her eyes blinking now, and her mouth open a little. She might know rough men and their ways, but here were two men, ugly as sin, speaking strangely for devils.

"Young woman," said I with a grave bow that finished abruptly against Tadg Mor's supporting shoulder, "is there anything we could be doing for you?"

"Na, na! dinna let me keep ye," she said quickly. But then she had another thought and pointed with her hand. "There's a drouth on me. The water is yonder, and the sound o't in my ears the live-long day."

Where she pointed, near the gateway, a jet of spring water spouted from a carved madman's mouth into a white granite basin. A clear, cool basin of water, but the tinkle of the falling streamlet was as lonely as a linnet's song.

"All the live-long day," I murmured, and thought of her loneliness and drouth.

THERE was an iron cup chained to the basin, and this cup I rinsed and filled and raised to my lips.

"No, it is not you who want it," I protested, emptied the cup, filled it again, and tugged softly at the staple holding the chain. "There is some way out of this if I could think of it," said I.

And there I jerked the chain so sharply that it broke below the cup, and the water splashed over me. I was halfway across the cobbles before I noticed that the cup was empty, and, shaking my head, I stalked back to the basin. When at last I reached her with the nearly full cup she smiled for the first time.

"Bairn, but ye are fou," said she, and emptied the cup in one drought, and looked regretfully into the bottom of it.

"You did that well, Maurteen," commended Tadg Mor. He was sitting on the side bar of the stocks, watching her drink greedy as a child, and now he dropped his head between his knees and covered his head with his hands so that only his long hooked nose protruded.

"I will be crying salt tears in a minute, Maurteen," he mumbled, "Is this not the cruel world we have landed in?"

"Cry away, brother," I comforted him," if that will help, and I will clout you when I want you to stop."

He shook the soft tears out of his eyes and looked over his shoulder at the girl sitting so straight on her narrow board.

"You are a bonny, bonny girl, as Ranald Ban would say," he praised her, "and if I were sober I would kiss you. Will tomorrow morning do as well?"

Her gray eyes flared at him. "Gin ye put yer ram's nose anigh me," she threatened, "I'll brak my fast on it—and none the worse ye'll be for the loss."

"Maurteen!" cried Tadg Mor in admiration, "hasn't she the very tongue of my aunt, who used to leather us and we so high?"

"Silence will become you, Tadg Mor O'Kavanagh," I said sternly, "if your tongue cannot keep a decent hold on itself," and I turned to the girl. "What is your name, young woman?"

"Meg—Margaret Anderson, if ye maun ken."

"That is a Norse name and not Gaelic, but nevertheless I am sorry to see you in this hobble. Where is the man that should be standing by your side?"

"Whatna man?" Her eyes wondered.

"The man that wronged—"

"Ye low-minded gangrel!" she cried.

I was not so drunk I could not get my head out of the way of the metal cup as it flew. I caught it in the air as if it were a hurley ball, and handed it to Tadg Mor.

"The girl has still a drouth on her. It is your turn."

"To be sure." He clattered across the cobbles in his huge sea boots, and from the fountain shouted over his shoulder. "She is my aunt back in the flesh. Keep your ear out of her way, I warn you." I stood looking down at her and touched my leather bonnet.

"Your pardon!" said I, my eyes on her clean mouth. "The man who would stand at your side would be an honest man, I think."

"So you stand—but I have my doubts," said she.

She drank that second cup of water more continently, and her shoulders shivered as she drank.

"*Mhuire!* the girleen is cold," cried Tadg Mor, and forthwith lumbered off his leather storm-coat and bundled it round her. "There, little one!" And he patted her shoulder.

I looked at him. "You are a fine big figure of a man, Tadg Mor," I said, "and kindly too, even if you are a robber."

And indeed he was a grand, stripped-for-fight figure, his mighty shoulders straining the knitted vest, his sword belt narrowing his hips, his sinewy arms hairy as a boar's hide.

Margaret Anderson looked from one to the other of us, her eyes perplexed and a frown between them.

"Ye two mad loons frighten me," she whispered. "Are all Irishers like you?"

"Most of them are middling honest as well," Tadg Mor told her.

"Wait ye!" I cried impatiently. "Let us be orderly in this. Tell me, Margaret Anderson, why are you hobbled here?"

"Do you mak' it your business?"

"Girl, girl!" cried Tadg Mor. "It is a way he has and he with drink taken. Answer him or we will still be in this place and night on top of us."

"I called Andra Cant a snivellin' ranter," she said defiantly.

"And who is this Andrew Cant whose retort has been so hard and so dolorous for you."

"He's our Kirk minister."

"I can understand," said I, "that you could not call a kirk minister a name that would get more under his skin. But—"

"There was mair to it than that." And then some control in her gave way and she went on impulsively. "I said that it was rank unhalesome of him, at his age—twa score an' mair—to be speakin' a third woman for wife, an' his second not cold aneath the sod."

"He has some of the qualities of a sound husband," said I. "Is that all, Margaret Anderson?"

"There's worse. I tell't him I wouldn'a sit under him another preaching, an' him ding-dingin' sabbath after sabbath—twa score and three as I kept count, with sermons all on one text."

"That was a notable text, surely. What was it?"

"Dinna ye be makin' fun o' me, black laddie. I didna gang to the Kirk for three Sundays, and himself has put the joogs on me for three days. This is the second. But I'll last it, and, what's more, I'll nae gang three more Sabbaths, and three after that. Aye, till the wind and the snow blows atween my bare bones."

Her voice had lifted into a skirl and her gray eyes flared into a flame. I patted her shoulder and she shrank away from me.

"Hush!" I quieted her. "But was it not a notable text, that held two score and three discourses in it. You were saying it was—?"

"Go and find out!" Yon's his house, and him, nae doot, peekin' thro' the pane for ye to take dirk to me."

I TURNED on my heel. The house she pointed out, at one corner of the quadrangle that made the kirk close, was tall and narrow, with a doorway recessed under an arch.

The clamped door was closed tight, and I dimly wondered why any man of God had need to hide himself behind

bars. I gave the sound oak the heel of my fist, the iron toe of my shoe, the hilt of my father's sword, the drive of my shoulder, but that stout door did not so much as groan. Then I put my head out and called:

"Your ox shoulders here, brother."

But I had barely spoken when the door creaked open behind me, and I jerked round, hand on hilt, at the man that had opened it wide.

"Slay me then, O man of Belial!" was his greeting, and his head was up for the blow.

He was a lean, middle-sized man of my own build, not yet old but well grizzled. His hollowed cheeks below the strong eye-bones were whiter than the thin beard on his chin, and his steel eyes gleamed defiance under a dome of brow that carried no hair, and the bands of white at his neck made the pallor of his skin the color of the belly of a salmon two weeks in river water.

"Are you the minister, Andrew Cant?"

"Such is my name, and I serve the Lord humbly."

"Is it true that you have housed two score and three sermons in one text?"

"Mock thou the servant of the Lord," he boomed, "and the law bonds of the Lord shall crush thee. Get thy work over, thou bloody Irisher."

I was tired persuading men that I was not Irish.

"I fear me," I said regretfully, "that that notable text will evade me. There is one other request I have to make. The key of your parish stocks."

"I have it not. My grave-digger had it, and I fear he has died under barbarous swords in the streets below."

"An apology is due you," said I politely, "and this your busy season in the trade."

He lifted up his voice. "If I had the key I would not yield it, for though you make my flesh carrion, I will never be the outgate to lead that stiff-necked woman towards the charnel-house of lust."

I stepped forward and laid my hand softly on the lapel of his dark gray coat, but he never flinched.

"Man," said I, "that is fine cloth. Come with me now, for I like peace—but if you will not come with me I will like that too, for at this minute peace tastes like dust in my mouth."

He came quietly and without a word, his strong face composed but his eyes looking strangely at this strange drunken man.

So we came to the side of the stocks, and Margaret Anderson gathered herself inside the leather coat.

"Is that the man himself?" enquired Tadg Mor.

The kirkman looked at Tadg, and lifted up his voice. "Cut ye and pierce deep, for the blood of the martyr shall be his assurance against hell's fire."

"You are orthodox as far as you go," I agreed, "but look at that young woman there, her face wan and her eyes bloodshot, and terror in her heart all day at the sounds of war, and tell me if you ever read in the Bible of the charity of a cup of spring water."

"My hand, Maurteen!" cried Tadg Mor. "That was well put and not a stutter down the length of it. Answer him if you can, gray badger."

"I will answer him," cried the man, and he was no saner than we were. "Had I the key I would have freed her till another day, and my sinful flesh grieved that she should thirst; but better thirst now with repentance than forever in the furnace of hell."

Margaret Anderson's hand came out from the leather coat with the iron cup clenched in it. But before she could throw it, I took it firmly from her, and flung it against the far wall.

"Good!" commended Tadg Mor. "She might do the poor man a hurt." And his hand moved towards his hip.

"No, Tadg Mor!" I stopped him. "We must not fall back on the black knife till all else fails us."

She sat straight, looking up at us without fear.

I went round to the front of the stocks and bent to the iron trap bar. The hasp of it was held down by a hand-forged padlock. Tadg Mor bent over my shoulder.

"It might not be as strong as it looks" said he.

"Is it stronger than you are?"

"Give me room at it."

He crouched down and patted the lock, tugged at it softly, tugged at it again and listened, nodding his head.

"I know where the weakness lies, if you could call it that. Watch me now."

His hard great hands grasped the lock at each side of the shackle-loop, and his shoulders hunched.

"Pray now to the locksmith that forged you," he growled, and with a smooth steadiness that looked easy let the strength pour down into his hands. His knuckles whitened, his forearms ridged into rods, a vein came up in his neck, one shoulder slowly hunched sideways; and when I thought that all the strength was out of him he gave one explosive jerk, and there was the lock in his hand, the shackle loop open. He straightened up, all his muscles relaxing, and dropped the lock at his toes.

"I knew where to put the strain," he said, "for no matter how big a lock is, its weakness lies in the bolt that threads the shackle. And mark you, Maurteen, there was a small barrel of strength left in me at the end."

He flung up the trap bar on its hinge and reached a hand to the prisoner. "Out of your snare, little one!" But indeed she was not little.

She shook her head. "There's nae life below my knees."

Suddenly, then, she was in his arms and off the stocks, his leather coat bundled about her.

"Dinna hold me," she protested. "I canna stand to be held."

"Childeen, childeen!" his voice soothed her. "Let your uncle hold you till the blood runs."

And she leant against him, his arm round her, her feet fumbling on the cobbles with the uncertainty of a child's, and her face twisted into that smile of agony that is caused by *culla greefeen*—pins and needles.

ANDREW CANT was mouthing words as I came to his side. "Lost—lost! Damned and lost!"

"Patience!" I comforted him, unbuckling my sword belt and pulling my torn tunic over my head.

He made no protest, no struggle when I stripped him of his dark gray broadcloth coat. It was warm and snug about my shoulders, and I belted my sword over it. Tadg Mor's mouth was open.

"Have you any other bit of devilment in your mind for us?" said he.

"One last bit," I told him, laying hold of my victim.

He looked as tough and wiry as woodbine, and could have made a pretty struggle if he wanted to, but he was like a bag of meal in my hands as I lifted and set him on the cross bar of the stocks. I placed his ankles in the half-circle of the bottom bar and brought the trap down over them.

"Why could not myself think of that?" lamented Tadg Mor. "This story will go the length and breadth of Ireland if God spares me to see its pleasant shores. Girl dear, why are you not laughing?"

Indeed she was not laughing, for already a thought of the future must have come into her mind. She had recovered the use of her feet now in some degree, and was loose from Tadg Mor's arms, supporting herself instead by the side-bar of the stocks.

"Ye are just, I think," said she, "but dinna spoil it."

"Wait ye!" cried Tadg Mor. "If I have no great head, I have something near as useful."

He fitted the lock back in the staple of the hasp, and, this time using all his strength and a grunt to help, twisted the shackle into an over-lapping loop.

"There now! It will take a blacksmith to unravel that, and I am thinking there are not many left in this town, being quarrelsome men by nature."

I stood in front of the stocks and looked at our prisoner, but he was not looking at me. He had eyes only for the tall woman holding the side-bar of the stocks, her tossed hair about her face, her eyes unafraid of the devouring light in his.

"Raise up your voice against us in your four-and-fortieth sermon, and prove your God stronger than mine," I said solemnly.

And he did it. He was as mad as I was and entirely without fear. His mouth opened, his eyes flamed, and his great voice poured out of him. And at last I learned what his text was. It was from Isaiah "Hell hath enlarged her soul, and opened her mouth without any bounds." His words boomed back from the walls of the quadrangle.

But suddenly Tadg Mor clouted his own breast and cried aloud. "Mother o' Grace! Am I listening to heretic preaching?" And forthwith he picked Margaret Anderson up, coat and all, and clattered out of the quadrangle by the gate we had entered.

I turned on my heel and followed them slowly. And there Andrew Cant's preaching stopped, and his voice, shrill as a woman's, made a prayer to me.

"Slay me! Slay me! Slay me!"

But I left him there. I never set eyes on him again, nor do I know if the bar-

barous and lustful conduct of two Irishers is recorded in the session book of the kirk.

TADG MOR and the young woman waited for me round the corner, but Tadg Mor had no arm around her now. She stood facing him, her strong feet gripping the cobbles with wide-spaced toes; and he stood leaning away from her, one hand rubbing his ear. And ever and again as the breeze veered and drifted, the sound of Andrew Cant's voice lifted faintly and died away. He was again at his mad preaching to the empty quadrangle, unless the jackdaws and the pigeons and the sparrows had come down to listen to a new and sterner Francis.

"I know at last," said I weightily, "why the great and terrible John Knox persecuted Mary of Scotland. And another thing I know, Tadg Mor—"

"Only a brother's kiss I was giving her," said he, "and here I am deaf for three days."

"You were her uncle also a short time ago, but what I know deals not with kissing her but with death. Your death and mine, brother, for now indeed I know that we, all of us, Gael and English, can never beat these men and the men they lead."

"Twice already—"

"And many more times yet. But they are strong with the strength of their stern Jehovah, who only chastises them with defeat for the sins of the people, but must lead them victorious in the end. And we, poor soldiering men, shall be hunted down like wolves and slain without ruth to the greater glory of that stern deity. And there's an end of us."

"And of puir Meg Anderson," said that girl, a bitter irony in her voice. "What's to come o' me in this toon o' Aberdeen after this day's work, and what's to come o' me out yonder among Montrose's soldiers?"

"Anything you like, and nothing you do not like," said I.

"Thank you," said she.

"It could be that our meddling has done you an ill service," I said. "Is there no place of refuge for you inside or outside this town?"

"My father's dead, and my mither new married. I have an Uncle Alick, a shipmaster, a guid and kindly man, but he bides far frae here, at Maviston of Lochloy."

"And where is that?"

"A wee bit fishin' place near Nairn in Moray."

The virtuous glow of a deed well done was still in me, and lit a new road. "Moray," said I. "That is not far for us. In ten days or less we will be going through it like a hot wind. Look you, Margaret Anderson! We will take you to your uncle."

"And a richt pleasant greetin' he'll gi'e me oot o' your hands," she said, the iron still in her voice.

"You are hard to please. But you need have no fear. There are fifty women in the regiment already, and no weak ones as far as I know."

"It is not for me to say, Maurteen," Tadg Mor began to argue.

"Don't say it then. The choice is yours, girl, and we will not press you. O'Cahan's regiment as far as Lochloy, or Andrew Cant and his stocks here in Aberdeen."

She threw back her head, and her lustrous eyes met mine fairly. "The choice is poor, but I ha'e made it. I'll come, and the Lord have mercy on me."

"There is my fine one!" commended Tadg Mor, patting her shoulder. "And you need not be one wee small bit afraid of your old grandfather, Tadg Mor."

"I wish," said I, "that you would decide on your kinship and stick to it."

"We will be leaving that to the bit of a girl herself—and who knows?"

"You poor lout!" she said, jerking away from his hand. "Of you and a'

the others that'll be like you, I ha'e no fear, but of this black lad wi' his wicked black e'en I ha'e fear in my bones already."

"Let that fear abide," said I. "Come, then! Tonight Sorcha MacNeill of Ulster will take care of you, and tomorrow we will replenish your wardrobe."

Tadg Mor lifted up his voice in an old song:

"And she shall swing a silken gown
A milk white steed to ride upon;
With silver buckles on her shoon,
And silver belt her waist to span."

And that is how we, two half-drunken men, took Margaret Anderson out of Aberdeen.

But we did not make Maviston of Lochloy in ten days nor in ten weeks. It was nearer ten months before Maviston of Lochloy lay two miles from our camp. And by that time Margaret Anderson had made a strong place for herself in the regiment and was like to bide in it.

CHAPTER II

THE CATTLE RAID

I HAD just been hit on the bone under my left eye by a slitter ball. Thirty men of us chosen from Colonel Manus O'Cahan's Irish regiment were playing a bout of hurley against thirty picked men of the MacDonald's—swank lads from Glengarry and Moidart and Mull—on a green park of level grass before the demesne house of Boath. That was on the eighth day of May in the year of forty-five, the eve on the great battle of Auldearn, which battle is the only thing, and a great thing, that that small place is famous for.

Our Captain-General, Seumas Graham the great Montrose, and his staff were looking on from the portico of the house, and Montrose was laying wagers with his major-general, the mighty Alasdair Colkitto MacDonald.

This game that the Irish call hurley is the same game that the Scots call shinty, and is played with a hooked stick or *caman* and a small ball called a slitter; but it is not a game unless war is a game. I have seen battles that were mild in the onset by the side of it. The Irish were used to play stripped to the trews and barefooted, while the Highlandmen, more circumspect, wore kilt and crotal shirt; but when the contest took on heat the clansmen had a habit of shedding their kilts, and, when that happened, our women fled the field.

The slitter ball that hit me under the eye was only a knot of pine wrapped in worsted hose, and it had more corners than any ball should have. I was reasonably quick on my feet, though not strong, and I was credited with a quick eye for a flying ball, so my post was to hold the Irish goal, which was no more than two piles of tunics with ten paces between. My foster-brother, Tadg Mor O'Kavanagh, was guard in front of me, and if there was a better man with a *caman* he was not of my acquaintance. He was fast and sure, with the heart of a lion, and if he sometimes missed the ball he never missed his man or his four or five men.

We had been fighting it out a matter of two hours or so with the score of the game three goals each, and the master of the field, Angus of Glengerry, proclaimed that the next would decide the victors for that day. The fight raged up and down the field then, and it was shortly after that the ball hit me, struck close in by Ranald Ban MacKinnon of Mull. Indeed, I might have cleared my goal if Tadg Mor had not deflected the ball fairly into my face as I leaped. He broke its force, but the blow was shrewd enough to stagger me, and that was enough, for, before I could gather myself, I was flat on my back with feet trampling over me and hard bodies flattening the last wind out of me.

The next thing I knew I was sitting aside on Tadg Mor's knee, and he was holding a cold stone under my eye, and I was crowing like a cock to get my wind back.

Out of one eye I could see the young eagle face of Ranald Ban MacKinnon leaning down to me, a pulse beating hard in his fine brown neck, and his flaxen hair dark with sweat about the temples. He was patting my shoulder and telling me how sorry he was.

"Sorry how are you!" growled Tadg Mor derisively, "and you after trampling on top of him as well."

Ranald Ban lifted Tadg Mor's hand from my eye, and I found to my satisfaction that the sight was not scattered in it.

"Dhiaoul!" exclaimed Ranald Ban, disgustedly throwing Tadg Mor's hand aside, stone and all. "The skin is not even broken, and I hoping to leave my mark on him after what he did to me that day on the Haugh of Balvenie."

"You Mull robber!" roared Tadg Mor. "A nice plover's egg he'll have under his eye by tomorrow's morn."

"And he ugly enough as it is," said Ranald Ban.

I had my breath back now.

"I did nothing at all to you at Balvenie, Ranald Ban," I protested.

"You did so, Maurteen. You put your knee and your hurley in the small of my back, and I not able to walk straight for a week."

"Was it a goal that time?" I asked them.

"And a foul one," said Tadg Mor.

"Yourself and the ball and thirty men with ye went through the goal," Ranald Ban told me, "and you can call it what you like."

"We were beat so," said I.

"Have it your own way, Ranald Avic," said Tadg Mor. "It was time for ye to win something, since we win all the battles."

I GOT to my feet and felt the skin already tightening under my eye. But in that hard-bitten small army of Gaeldom that had gone like a flame through Perth and Argyll and Aberdeen and Moray, we thought little of bruised eyes or slashed scalps in a friendly game amongst ourselves.

The players were already scattering off the field, buckling tunic and kilt, the Macdonald lads crowing it over the Irish, who, in turn, reminded the Highlandmen of a certain great game at Balvenie in the days before General William Baillie or Sir John Hurry tried to nip us between their Covenant armies. I was belting on the dark-gray broadcloth coat I had taken off the Aberdeen kirkman that bloody day of last September; and there Tadg Mor swore heartily, his hand up to his ear after a fashion of his.

"Here comes our Meg! Here she comes now! And it is me that will get the blame for that black eye."

"Stand this side of me," I told him, "and she might not see it."

But Margaret Anderson came straight through the scattering men, and any man in her road got out of it as quickly as he could.

Her head was up, her fine linten hair in two long plaits on her breast, and she came down on us gallant and easy as a schooner before the wind.

I stood back of Tadg Mor and looked at her sideways out of my good eye, but she pushed the big men out of her way disdainfully, caught my long chin in her firm fingers, and brought my face full forward. Her gray eyes flashed straight into mine, for she was of equal height with me.

"Gin ye had sense, Martin Somers," she cried in her high coastwise tongue that I can only hint at in this writing, "you wouldna be at this fearsome game with they red-shanks." That is the name she had for the Highlandmen.

"True for you, Margaret," I agreed mildly. "It was Tadg Mor made me."

"Oh, the traitor!" cried my foster-brother.

"Didna the Lord gie ye a mind o' you ain?" she said, and grimaced at my purpling eye. "Sakes alive, laddie, gin a lass was to meet you in the gloamin' she would run a mile."

She would have her reasons," said I still mildly.

"And the wrong ones," said she, "for you are a puir harmless loon."

"Meg Anderson," boomed Tadg Mor, "if you belonged to me I would skelp you day and dark, and in between whiles to make sure."

"And weel I'd deserve it if I let you own me," she gave him back, and caught him neatly, but not too hard, on the ear with her open hand.

Tall and supple as a blown birch branch, her hair lighter than flax, her eyes grayer than the blue flax flower, this girl that Tadg Mor and I had plucked out of the parish stocks was more than an attractive woman. Tadg Mor and I knew that, and which of us knew it the better I often wondered. Sometimes I would catch him looking at her, a wistful look in his fighter's eyes, and then he would look at me and look away, and run his hand through his red hair.

For near on ten months now she had been part of the camp and had her own importance. She had found that the Gaelic women that followed their men to war were no ordinary parasitic camp-followers.

They were an important part of a Gaelic army on campaign: the camp-makers, shelter-builders, providers, scavengers, cooks, bearers, nurses—in truth, nearly everything that is represented in continental armies by the quartermaster and surgical corps.

Amongst such women Margaret Anderson found her feet firmly on the ground. She had character and a great well of spirit, with an ability for organization that can be found only in her nation. Moreover, she had a fine, easy-going contempt for men, and a not-to-be-gainsaid manner of ordering them about, and amongst women she was frank and understanding and kindly. Herself and Sorcha MacNeill, a middle-aged mother of soldiers, were rulers in the camp.

She was no longer afraid of me, or she did not show it, and of Tadg Mor O'Kavanagh she had never been afraid. As a kind of ritual she used to clump his ear when he was near enough, and he used to yelp in mock pain and threaten her with mock ferocity. We were fond of her and she trusted us. Between us there grew a strange and close tie.

We provided her with all she needed, and I think that Tadg Mor, outside the regular foraging of the campaign, did some plain stealing, so that she be equipped as fine as any of the gentle ladies that sometimes visited the camp from the houses of the loyalist lairds.

She had silver buckles on her shoon that he polished every morning, and a silken gown, and a Spanish comb for her hair, but he had not yet succeeded in looting a silver belt for the span of her waist. And she was happy, too; we could see the happiness growing on her, and a lovely white bonniness with it. And on the Sabbath, when she was fully adorned to go up with me to hear Montrose's chaplain preach—she remained always a staunch Calvinist—she was finer than an earl's daughter. Montrose himself was proud to see her there. And she would look at Tadg Mor and at me, the soft lustre in her eyes, and she would say: "Loons! am I nae the proud one!"

MARGARET ANDERSON had clouted Tadg Mor on the accustomed ear; he had yelped and threatened as was the

ritual, and Ranald Ban MacKinnon was laughing at him; but young Ranald Ban was careful to stand well out of reach of both Tadg Mor and the tall girl.

"You did not see that one coming, Tadg boy," he mocked. "My soul, but she reminds me of a girl I once knew out of Moidart."

"Quit your haverin'. Ranald Ban," she stopped him. "I hae business wi' Martin Somers."

Tadg Mor

This Ranald Ban MacKinnon was a remarkable young man, for, besides being more than ordinary with caman or claymore, he had the loosest-hung tongue in the most talkative small army in the world. Anything at all, word or incident reminded him of something he had seen or done or heard, and out that something had to come to the nearest listener. He would talk round the camp fire the night long, and wake one of us up in the cold dawn to share a laugh with him.

All he usually got at that hour was a blindly aimed kick that more than once ended in a turmoil amongst the hot ashes. But for all his lightness he had a heart of corn, and an iron steadfastness in fight or friendship.

"I do wish, Margaret," I said reprimandingly, "you would show a little more dignity in public places."

"I will, as soon as your gowks learn to haud their hands and tongues where they belong."

"What is this business you have with me?"

"If our lads must hae meat, ye must go and fetch it. We hae only ae stirk by us."

For three weeks now we had been living from hand to mouth, with Baillie pricking at our tails and Sir John Hurry clearing the country ahead of us as he lured us on. Here at Auldearn we were down to our last beast, and it takes a good many to make a meal for three thousand men.

"O'Cahan will be attending to it, but I will say a word to Colkitto," I told Margaret.

"Here comes the big lad then, wi' bonny Montrose."

Montrose and his major general, Alasdair, strolled across the field towards us. Alasdair was a huge man, very shapely in the shoulder and leg below the black and green and red tartan of Clanranald. By his side, Seumas Graham of Montrose looked slim and young; a slender man of middle height, with flowing darkly-fair hair, dark gray eyes, and a smooth fresh complexion; and there was aye a queer, aloof, half-wistful smile about his eye sockets. Today he was neat in a belted light blue jerkin, and carried his hat swinging in his hand.

A few of his gentlemen walked behind him: faithful Sir William Rollo limping lightly on his one sound leg; Nathaniel Gordon, that iron soldier of fortune, with the gash on his leather cheek that had blinded one eye; leal young Lord Gordon, heir of Huntly, not long for this life; old Mormaor Ogilvie of Airlie, who would never forget the loss of his gallant son at Inverlochy; and others that I do not now recall. Our

colonel, Manus O'Cahan, was not there, I know. That small adequate man would be about his business, and that business his beloved regiment.

"You did not save the day for me, Maurteen," shouted Alasdair, "but small blame to you this time."

Montrose paused in front of me and I saluted him. He shook his head at me, and his fine hair swung on his shoulders.

"Clanranald has left its mark on you, Adjutant," he said, "and I am sorry, but not too sorry, for that last goal won me ten pounds Scots."

"Have you it in your pooch, Montrose?" Ranald Ban inquired.

And Montrose laughed. He was a courtier and lowland bred, and proud as Lucifer of caste and station, but with us he fell readily into the customs of the Gael, amongst whom a man, knowing the pride of race, talked to his chief on equal terms and did not hesitate to use the keen blade of wit. Montrose liked that life.

"Captain General," said I then, "the camp is short of meat."

"I know, Adjutant. That is why I am here. I had a tough piece to dine on. I have three thousand men in my hands and heart, and five hundred women," he gave his courtier bow to Margaret, "I will not have them go hungry in a teeming land. Look round ye, gentlemen."

We followed Montrose's look round that fat land of Moray.

"Very well! If the men of Moray—the Brodies and the Roses and the rest—will not help us with their swords, they must yield us their cattle to nourish the King's army. We camp here, gentlemen, and we strike from here, and here even my Ulstermen will have meat in plenty. Let the women build up the fires, Mistress Anderson; tonight there will be meat to cook."

And that was why a party one hundred strong went raiding for a herd of cattle into the lands of one Rose of Belivat.

THERE WAS Tadg Mor O'Kavanagh with half a company of O'Cahan's regiment, and Ranald Ban MacKinnon with some two score lads of Uist and Mull. Nathaniel Gordon rode with them to see what fun might be going, and I went too, to be rid of women for a space.

I was mounted on a tall bay saddle-horse that Tadg Mor and myself had lifted out of Laird Brodie of Brodie's stable two days before. Tadg Mor for some reason never liked a tall horse, but preferred to have his feet near the ground on a broad-backed highland shelt. Ranald Ban MacKinnon rode a like beast, and Nat Gordon, a famous breaker of horses, was mounted on a stallion of the Huntly cavalry. Most of the others padded afoot, but that was no hindrance, for they were as tireless as hounds. We had a man of the Grants of Cromdale to guide us, a wiry man who had spent all his life stealing cattle in these lowlands and deserved hanging for other things as well.

Southward we went then at a jog trot behind Colin Grant, slung targes and flint locks slapping on broad backs, and broadswords gripped under oxter; and like all companies of the Gael there was talk and laughter and snatches of song and bouts of sly horseplay. Ranald Ban was riding close ahead of Tadg Mor and me, telling some queer story to Nat Gordon, who had heard queer stories and made a few as far away as the banks of the Elbe; and Tadg Mor talked to me.

"Did you see Colkitto whispering to me back there?"

"About some woman?"

"What else? He wanted to know if Meg Anderson belonged to you."

"And you lied as usual."

"I did not. "If she does not belong

to Maurteen,' says I, 'she does not belong to anyone else.'"

"Why did you not tell the whole truth?"

"I had my reasons. Anyway, how do I know which belongs to which?"

"You know well."

"Which then?"

"What else did Colkitto say?"

"'Find out for me, Tadg,' says he. 'I would like to know.' 'Why would you, Col?' I gave him back. 'Because,' says he, 'I would not like to offend Maurteen and he the only Englishman amongst us.' He has his hot eye on the girl. 'You would not like to offend me either, Alasdair,' I coaxed him. 'That would not trouble me,' he says laughing, and off he went. And mind you, he would not be an easy man to put in his place."

"Margaret Anderson will do that for him as she has for you, Tadg Mor!"

"Do I not know it?" said he, his hand up to his ear.

Ranald Ban reined back to my side, laughing.

"Whenever I see him rubbing his ear that way," he said, "I know the thing in his mind. That girl—"

"What girl?"

"Meg out of Aberdeen. She reminds me of a girl I knew one time in Barra—"

"I warn you, Ranald crooked-tongue," said Tadg Mor, "that I am not going to laugh at this one."

"You will so. She was a girl of the MacNeills, and her father was a proud man, a half bit of a half-sir; and if he had one hate in the world it was for the Harris MacLeods. And damned if a gallant lad of that breed did not set his eye on the daughter Ellen and his heart after it.

"I do not know anything about the wooing, but if it was warm it was not long, for in less than a month the bold MacLeod came slipping across the ford one dark of night and back again before morning, and Ellen was with him, and she willing.

"I was there myself when MacNeill heard the news. First of all he wept before us outside his own door, and then he gave us the full and honorable genealogy of his race from Barra to Gigha, and then he wept again for the black slur that was now on it; and after that he raved and recalled every bad thing he had ever heard about the MacLeods. Indeed that clan is no worse and no better than the rest of us, but a bad and a bloody thing here and there could be named against it, and he named them all and invented one or two.

"*Dhia!* but he was worth hearing that day. And at the very end he gathered all his powers, and he threw his hands and his face up and roared with all his might into the face of the sky: 'But shamed as I am this day, I thank the great God and all His Saints that that ill-born MacLeod has got hold of the laziest, idlest, dirtiest, worst-tempered slut in all Scotland.'"

He stopped and waited for our laughter.

"Well?" said Tadg Mor.

"Is that all?" I inquired.

"That is all."

I pulled my horse around to his other side and we had him close between us, our feet under his stirrups, and with Nat Gordon ahead blocking the way. He looked from one to the other of us and cried out:

"What have I said against the girl this time?"

"You will tell us," said I, "why Margaret Anderson reminded you of that fly-away girl out of Barra."

Ranald Ban rubbed his fine flaxen toss of hair desperately. "Meg has a hot temper, has she not?"

"Warm but sound."

"Was she lazy the day she carried your claymore in the snowdrifts of Glen Roy?" Tadg Mor wanted to know.

"She was not, but I was carrying a

hind for your supper that day, and—"

"Was she dirty," I persisted, "the time she fed you the juice of beef, and salved the head wound you got at Inverlochy?"

"And it was the back of your head, moreover," roared Tadg Mor. "Who was your face turned from that time?"

Ranald Ban rubbed the back of his head, where the healed wound was.

"I am thinking I had hold of the wrong girl," he admitted lamely.

"Pity for you that you did not remember that earlier," I said. And with one concerted heave we had him somersaulting over his pony's head.

HE WAS as active as a cat, and landed neatly on his feet, but his pony bumped him with its head and knocked him flat against the hocks of Nat Gordon's mount, that, like a well trained cavalry horse, danced sideways without kicking. He scrambled to his feet, swearing as fast as he could remember.

"You Irishers!" he yelled and shook his fist. "Wait, Maurteen, till I get you with a hurley in your hand and I'll blacken your other eye for you."

"You will not be able," I told him, "if I get your back turned first."

He laughed then, bearing no ill-will.

"Have it your own way this time," he said, and remounted his pony between us; but in the saddle he flared again. "Your souls to hell! I would put my hands under her feet any day, and you know it."

"In that case," said Tadg Mor, "let us take it that you never left your saddle." And we all laughed. Ranald Ban MacKinnan was a very lovable man in those far-off days when we were all young and made fun in the face of death.

Nat Gordon was half turned to us, his scarred cheek twisted with laughter.

"Take due notice, gentlemen," he said, "that if anyone tells you I miscalled your long-legged she-bairn, I here and now proclaim it a lie."

He stayed turned in his saddle, but he was no longer looking at us, but at something far behind us and below.

"See that?" said he excitedly, and we turned to look.

We were at the head of the long slope that we had been steadily climbing all the way up from the hamlet. It was a cool early evening in May, with filmy clouds sailing thinly in a high, thin sky, and the air was clearer than rock crystal. Auldearn was hidden in its hollow behind the woods, but there was Nairn Town close-set on its green carse, and blue plumes of smoke drifting eastward from its huddled chimneys.

A shallow river curved by it on our side, and a new bridge spanned across in two arches. And beyond Nairn was spread the lifting floor of the northern sea, a stronger green than the sky, veined with the paler green of currents and splashed with islands of purple.

In that clear air the bold coast north of the firth seemed near enough to shout to, though it was a dozen miles away; the great whaleback of the Black Isle flowed in a clean curve crowned with the green of pasture and the dark of woods, and behind all set the northern hills, blue and fainter blue to where, far and far away, stood one lonely peak, a blue thinner than smoke.

"Aye, but she is bonny, bonny," murmured Ranald Ban.

The bonny thing and the thing we thought Nat Gordon was pointing to was a ship in full sail coming down the coast from the narrows of Chanonry. She was the biggest vessel I had ever seen, and every sail was set to catch the faint draw of western air. A lovely sight, that great tower of canvas against the blue of the mountains, with a white plume flowing backwards from the prow.

"Not that, though she is bonny," said Nat a little impatiently. "See that

smoke in the sandhills west of the town."

We saw the smoke then, many plumes and drifts of it, lifting over the dunes that fringed the shore. One would say that there was a good-sized town sending up its evening smoke, but we knew that there was no house, other than a few fishing huts, along that shallow coast.

"That is a camp and no small one," said Nat Gordon.

"Sir John Hurry and his army!" exclaimed Ranald Ban. "But—"

"I know. Hurry camped last night at Dalcross of Petty, so our outriders reported, and that is ten miles from here."

"That smoke is not five."

"Whatever it is, we must look into it," said Gordon, and reined his horse round. "Montrose must be told about it, if he does not know already. Sorry, comrades, to miss any sport that may be going." And he gave his horse reins and spur. A gallant prompt man, and cunning in war and ambuscade. He shouted over his shoulder. "Bring in a good herd; we might be needing a sound lining under our belts the morn."

WE WENT down the back of the ridge into a country of pine groves, with a rough track winding between, and out across thin pastures and patches of young corn greener than grass. This was one of the old droving roads to the south and we followed it for a mile. But there were no cattle to be seen, not as much as an ewe and her lamb on the whole heathery curve of a round solitary hill on our right. Colin Grant, our guide, was none disappointed.

"The warning bell of Ardclach was ringing last night," he told us. "The beasties will be in their hidy holes. But myself will find them for you."

He swung us well westward of the strong house of Lethen, at that time garrisoned against us, and led us streaming down into a hollow on a small township of black houses scattered about a stone mill straddling a stream.

Whether they had warning of our coming I do not know, but there were no men about that small place, and the only women that we saw were a few old crones that came fearlessly to the smoking doorways and cursed us.

We found no cattle in that township nor in the stony fields about it, but Grant read the ground with knowing eyes, found a not too old cattle track, and finally came to where one, two, six, ten beasts had moved in the same direction. It was skilled work, and in a short time we were streaming full pelt across an upland moor, and even I, unused to tracking, could see that a strong herd had passed that way not so long before.

We ran the herd down in a fenced valley on the edge of a pine wood. Half a score of ragged men tried to scatter the beasts as we came, and an arrow flew amongst us here and there. But we were too quick for them, throwing our net wide, and frightening them into the wood with the explosion of a flint lock or two. There were all of eighty head, mostly small but meaty beasts, black and dun in color and shorter in the horn than our Irish beasts.

"Another beat like this, Colin," said Ranald Ban, "and we are not asking too much."

"Indeed, that is right," the Grant agreed. "A man should be leaving something on the ground for a hungry fellow coming after. There is a place I know below Carn Achagour that I never drew blank these twenty years."

We detached some third of our party to hurry this herd campwards and the rest of us followed Grant's leading. We were even more successful this time, with no herdsmen and no arrows to trouble us. We tracked down a hundred head of cattle, a flock of sheep with lambs, and a scatter of goats, hidden

inside palisades on the edge of a wood called Dulsie.

"A right kindly people," remarked Tadg Mor, "to save us the trouble of gathering the beasts."

"But you would need a man like me to find them for you," said Grant cunningly, "and that man would deserve his reward. If you will give me my pick of twenty and two lads to help I will be safe home in Cromdale with them before the morrow's morn."

"The pick of a bone, the same as the rest of us," Tadg Mor told him.

"I thought you would be refusing me," said Grant cheerfully, "but there was no harm in trying whatever. Let us take the road then."

BY THIS time it was within an hour of sundown, and the lads hurried the beasts to get beyond the danger point of Lethen before dark. Four or five of us came behind at our leisure, and the drove drew away gradually, the men circling and hallooing on the flanks. There were Ranald Ban and a body-servant of his, a solid hunk of a red man, Tadg Mor, Colin Grant and myself. Our road for a time paralleled the river Findhorn curving widely below us in its gorge, a great and lovely valley. Down in the bottom of the valley was a cluster of thatched houses with a gray kirk and a gray manse standing apart; and a treacherous swinging foot-bridge sagged from one crag to another across the river, where there was another cluster of black houses.

"That is the parish town of Ardclach," Grant told us, "and it is famous for having the highest bell-tower in all Scotland. There it is up there for you."

Up the slope above us on the summit of a round hillock stood a tall square stone tower roofed with flags, with one door facing us and one barred window high up under the eaves. It had a smoking short chimney at one end, and at the other a squat belfry arch with a great bell of dark bronze filling the mouth of it.

"They say there is gold in the brass of that bell," remarked Grant, "and that could be, for the clap of it is as tuneful and far-flung as the middle reed of the pipes. It is only rung for two things: to warn the people to kirk on Sabbath mornings, and to warn them that cattle runners are on the road. Ye heard it last night, and here are we."

"Some one bides up yonder by the smoke," said Ranald Ban.

"It could be. Lethen and the Kirk use it for a prison on occasion."

"Were you ever in it yourself, Colin my robber?" Tadg Mor questioned.

"Ay, was I. For one night, and I thought it my last night—but twenty of my friends from Ballindalloch rescued me in the morning with the rope around my neck."

We were directly below the tower now, and Ranald Ban checked his pony.

"If the Covenant has a prisoner up there," he said, "the same might be a friend of ours. Let us take a look."

He turned his pony up the brae, and I turned with him; and I often wonder since why I had no premonition of the thing I was turning to.

CHAPTER III

THE PRISONER IN THE TOWER

WE HAD reached the foot of the knoll on which the tower stood when a man came out of the single door, clapped it shut, turned the key in the lock, and made a run for it slantwise down the hill towards the township.

"Round him!" cried Ranald Ban, his pony's hooves slithering and clattering on the stony ground.

The fleeing man had no chance from the beginning, though he bounded nimbly enough on his short legs. The ponies

cut in ahead of him, and he saw that he could never make the shelter of the houses. He checked himself in the middle of a leap, hesitated, swerved round and back up the brae to the tower like an unwieldy hare. But before he could unlock the door we were up with him, Ranald Ban's cattle goad touching between his shoulder blades. At once he turned his face to us, his broad back to the door.

"Give it to me in the breist," he cried, his voice brazen against death.

"Patience, black brother!" said Ranald Ban dropping his point. "Yon was not well played. You should have kept your locked door between us."

The man looked around at the half circle of us, his eyes glowering under black brows. He was a powerful figure of a man in trews and ragged shirt, short in the leg, long in the body, and his bullet head solid as a culverin ball. His eyes stayed on the man of the Grants.

"Is it yourself, red Colin?" said he, his voice only surly now.

"Myself it is surely, Black Rab Fraser," replied that man half-tauntingly. "The trade is good these days."

"I promise you, Colin, that you will never see the inside of this tower again if the Hieland boys leave life in me."

"Kind, kind, Rab."

"For I will hang you myself outside the door of it."

"This boar has a tusk," cried Ranald Ban, laughing. "Black lad, who have you at the back of that door?"

"How would I know?" growled the black lad, "I am no' the gaoler."

"There are prisoners, then?"

Black Rab hesitated and then blurted, "Hugh Rose of Belivat has one prisoner here and that is all."

"Do not you believe him, MacKinnon," advised Grant. "Hugh Rose of Belivat never put a lad in prison, with a dirk or a rope handy."

"Whoever is in it might be a friend of ours," said Ranald Ban.

"The prisoner is no friend of yours," put in Black Rab, but a shade too hurriedly, I thought.

"We could decide that after seeing him. Will you open that door, stubborn man?"

"You might as well kill me without more talk," growled the man.

"I see that you have the key at your hip," said Ranald Ban patiently, reaching out his hand. "I will open it for you."

"Not while I have a drop of blood in me," said the other dourly, and then his voice lifted in challenge. "There are five of ye, and me without a weapon, but I dare ye to come at me one by one, weapon or no weapon."

Ranald Ban's body-servant, the hulking red fellow, stood at his master's stirrup, and Ranald Ban clapped him on the shoulder.

"I want that key, Hector—without blood on it."

"You will have it, *avic*," said Hector lightly, his spear heeling into the ground.

He walked forward slowly, his red head down, and his arms hanging loose; but suddenly he came alive, his feet spurned the gravel, and his arms flung themselves for the grapple. Black Rab Fraser was as quick, if not quicker, for he caught a flying wrist with one hand and a hunched shoulder with the other, and the two heaved out on the packed gravel before the doorstep.

That grapple did not last long. The man Hector was strong as a mastiff, but Black Rab was as strong as a boar. In half a minute or less they were on the ground with the Fraser safely on top. They fell close to Tadg Mor's pony that shied away from the tumble, but, as it shied, Tadg leant from the saddle-pad, and cleverly plucked the key from Black Rab's hip.

The man felt the tug, and twisting his head, saw the key in Tadg Mor's hand. There he grunted like the boar he was, tore himself free from the Highlandman

and launched himself at Tadg Mor. Tadg threw the key and I caught it in the air, and in the next instant he was torn off his pony, swearing through his laughter. He came down on one knee, but he drove his shoulder into the Fraser and heaved himself upright.

"We will see what you know of this game, my hardy man," said he, and he grappled the hardy man at the collar and elbow, lifted him clear of the ground and swung him in a clean half circle; but the black lad came down on his wide bowed feet as sure and as squat as a toad, and in turn swung Tadg, who landed on his feet just as surely.

"Neat!" said Tadg Mor. "We'll do that again." And so they went at it like a pair of clumsy dancers, and Ranald Ban nearly fell off his pony laughing at the weighty antic.

But I knew what Tadg Mor had in mind. He was giving me time to open the door.

So I slipped off my horse on the far side, threw the reins to Grant, and mounted the wide flag that made the step of the door. The lock clicked smoothly as one well used, and the heavy oak slab yielded quietly to press of shoulder.

A couple of paces inside the door steep stone steps led upwards between unplastered walls, and at my right hand a blank doorway opened into darkness. I put my head carefully inside and sniffed the dank darkness of an unused room.

"Anyone here?" I murmured, and only an echo murmured back from the stone walls and the stone roof. It was, in fact, the dungeon room but there was no one in it.

I mounted the stairs and in the gloom at the head of it I was stopped by a door on the very last tread. It was locked, but the key was in the lock, and I turned it gently and tapped on the wood.

"*Tar isteac*—come in!" said a voice inside. And the voice was a woman's.

I OPENED the door out of the gloom and leant to look into a room that, by contrast, was full of light. There were two barred windows high up, one that we had seen from the slope, the other facing the west, and through that westering one the leveling sun came in one widening beam.

That room occupied the whole top story of the tower; it was floored with stone and the hewn rafters of bog pine supported the unrendered flags of the flat-pointed roof. There was an open fireplace with peat sods smoldering, a couch, a rough table carrying a ewer; and a big armchair of twisted wood.

In that big armchair sat the woman that had called to me in the Gaelic. She was young and dark, and, though she was sitting down, I saw that she was not tall. She sat there leaning back, very still and very calm, her dark head against the tall back of the chair, her hands resting lightly on the arm rests, and her ankles crossed at easy stretch.

Her hands were brown and shapely, and her square-toed small shoon carried silver buckles like Margaret Anderson's. The splay of sunlight from the window just touched those silver buckles. She had firm black brows above dark eyes and her face was softly dusky. She was wearing a dress the color of red wine, cut square at the neck, and a long cloak of dark green was thrown over the back of the chair.

But most clearly I remember the soft duskiness of her face below her dark brows, and her hair that was not curled, yet waved faintly.

"Who are you?" Her lips scarcely moved.

"Adjutant Martin Somers of O'Cahan's regiment," I told her, and I took two paces inside the door.

"You are near enough now. One of Graham's Irishry?"

"I am an Englishman," I said wearily, tired to the bone of telling people that.

"That is worse," said she, "but I am not afraid of you."

I looked round the bare room. "Are you the prisoner of this man—this Hugh Rose?" I could not believe it.

"That man is my father," she answered, "but you are welcome to say the worst in your mind about him."

"The thing in my mind," I gave back, "is that he might have his own reasons for making a prisoner of his daughter—if she is the prisoner."

"She was until you opened that door."

She was so calm that she frightened me, and I had nothing to say.

"I heard cattle lowing and runners ho-hoing past my window—my father's beasts, I hope. Are there many of you?"

"There are four or five below."

"Are they all as ugly as you are?" she inquired detachedly.

I knew that I was ugly, but no man likes to be told so.

"I am not sure about one or two," I answered, "but you will be able to judge."

"Is that a threat? Was it Black Rab closed your eye so neatly?"

"He would if he had time."

She sat up at that and her brown hands tightened on the arm rest.

"You have not killed—"

"At this minute he is having a pleasant wrestle with an Irishman in front of the door."

She loosed the strain, but did not lean back."

"I am sorry for your Irishman!" she said.

I laughed at that, and I think she was nettled.

"No Irisher in the world could put Rab Fraser on his back in a fair wrestle."

"Fair collar-and-elbow. He will be on his back surely."

"I do not believe it."

"Why not come and look for yourself?" I thought that was a right clever way of getting this strange young woman off my hands and on to Ranald Ban's. In my own mind I was cursing him for not coming to my rescue.

"I will do that," said she. She plucked her tartan cloak off the chair back and held it up for me to see.

"I will wager this against that old cloak of yours that Black Rab is not thrown."

I shook my head. "I need only one cloak."

"I will exchange cloaks with you if Rab is down. This is a good new cloak."

"Mine is better," said I, "but I will take that wager if you insist."

The cloak I was wearing over my old broadcloth was the famous hooded Irish war-cloak, ankle long, double woven of the finest worsted, dyed dark green with the berry of the rime, and lined with red silk. There was no more serviceable cloak anywhere—and I ran a good chance of losing it.

to be continued

"They can only hang us once . . ."

OLD TIMER

By Robert E. Pinkerton

JOHNNIE IRONS whanged away at the crumpled fender.

"There, damn ye!" he grunted. "That'll teach ye to look where ye're goin' and not be switchin' yer tail into rocks and trees."

But Johnnie's hand, hooked and stiff as dead manzanita, stroked the rusted sheet metal gently and his sharp gaze swept the ancient vehicle with affection.

"Jennie, ye're ugly as the oldest Digger squaw in Mariposa County," he said. "But you can go places in these hills where the bandboxes they make nowadays would scrape their bellies off."

He tested the rocks behind each wheel with his feet.

"Don't go workin' at your hobbles," he commanded sternly. "I got work to do and can't be fearin' you'll stray."

His heavy shoes scuffed through the fine dust and tough dry grass of a California mountain mid-summer. The breeze sucking up the canyon pressed thin overalls against stick like thighs.

Yet his short body was erect, his step quick, his pale eyes alert, as he crossed a little open flat where he was camped and went down faint wheel-tracks to what had once been a road.

He stopped there, suddenly and with profane anger. Tire prints, sharp as newly minted coins, marked the powdered clay.

"Just when I find a fair pocket, some damned greenhorn sniper has to come pokin' along!" Johnnie snorted. "One of those new cars with big tires. Must 'a'

flew to come this far. But if he got around the next bend he's stuck."

He plowed angrily through the thin dust, yet not too angrily to overlook the fact that the canyon breeze would have dulled the tire prints if they had been made more than ten minutes earlier.

"He'll be askin' me and Jennie to pull him out," Johnnie said in the mumble of men whose lives have been spent in solitude. "Good mind to leave him. Serve the damned sniper right. Why's a counter jumper think he can come up here and get rich, when men who've hunted a lifetime are still poor?"

His feet scuffed on around a turn and their pace quickened. Above manzanita brush beside the old road, two automobile tires protruded. A few yards more and Johnnie saw they were attached in normal manner to a coupe lying on its side.

Johnnie ran until he reached the car. Face up, legs pinned beneath the automobile, lay a man. Blood trickled through thin gray hair on one side of a bald head. A many pointed star, dazzling in the sunlight, was fastened to a suspender band.

The man's head turned slightly.

"That you, Johnnie Irons?" he asked.

"Johnnie Irons, sure. Who be you?"

Johnnie slid down the crumbling side of the road.

"Lute French!" he exclaimed. "Of all the damned fool things. Ain't ye got more sense? And you born in these hills within thirty miles of— Hurt bad, Lute?"

"Dunno. Think you can get it off, Johnnie?"

"Give me a solid pry and I could lift Joaquin Murrietta out o' the lowest pit in hell and heave him right smack into St. Peter's lap. How you suppose I've got along in these hills for the last eighty-eight years? Don't you worry, boy."

Lute French smiled. He was sixty, a grandfather.

"You ain't been here that long, Johnnie," he said.

"Like hell I ain't! Came to Californy in '48 and I ain't been out o' the state since—except over into Nevada, of course, and down to Mexico twice and up to Alaska."

"You weren't usin' any pry in '48," Lute French said as Johnnie reached under the car.

"That's the year I learned," Johnnie retorted. "We got to Placerville and— Lute, that ain't restin' hard on your legs."

"It pinched 'em when it went over," Lute said. "Broke?"

"Hard to tell, boy. Both legs bound. I'll have a look."

JOHNNIE IRONS crawled through the brush, examining the car. At last he returned and sat down beside Lute French.

"It wasn't Placerville then," Johnnie said. "Or even Hangtown. It was Old Dry Diggin's. End o' September, '48, when we got there. Left the Missouri in April. Lute, this is a tough job."

"How do you mean?"

"That car's just balanced. Back wheel's on a boulder. It might go either way. I could dig you out, only your legs is pinched on a ledge. If I start pryin' at her she might slip off and then the hull weight'd come down on ye."

Lute French was silent as he watched the old man.

"What you mean, *you* left the Missouri?" he asked at last.

"My mother did, and if she did I was along. I was born in July, but nobody ever knew where in hell at. No states or even territories then. Might 'a' been Wyoming or Utah. Never found it made much difference to me, though. If your leg ain't broke, it will be should somethin' slip. I hate to start anything, Lute. We're a long way from help."

"We'll have to chance it. If you

learned to use a pry eighty-eight years ago—"

"That's what I did!" Johnnie cried in his shrill voice. "We never heard o' any gold, crossin' the plains, and Old Dry Diggin's knocked all idea of a farm out o' my old man's head. He just grabbed him a shovel. Maw, she never was one to get excited. The old man got two or three ounces a day, but maw had a tub, an' the creek had plenty o' water. She started right in washin' clothes for miners and she made twice over what the old man did. If those legs o' yourn ain't broke, I'd hate like hell to break 'em, Lute. How'd you get in this fix, anyhow?"

"Road was narrow here but I thought I could pass," Lute French said. "Was just crawlin', and the lower side caved out from under. I'd 'a' been better off stayin' in the car, but with that canyon there—"

"Sure! Jumpin's an instinct. That's why you'll never see me up in any airplane. She bein' busy washin' all day, my maw fixed me up a crib to hold me. But I got a stick and pried the slats off and fell out on my head. 'No Irons ever got hurt in the head,' maw said. 'They couldn't be,' and she laced them slats in with rawhide and went back to washin'. She was always skeered the old man'd hit a pocket and get ahead of her. But what you come up here for in a car built like a snake? You ought 'o knowed better."

"Huntin' for you, Johnnie," Lute said. "Sam Kinley's filed notice of foreclosure on your place."

"The damned old blood-sucker!" Johnnie burst forth. "Just waited until I got off in the hills. And he said he wouldn't do nothin' till I come back. By God, I need a new top for Jennie an' I'll take his hide for it. Payin' him nine per cent interest for fifteen years now, too. Private banker? Hell! Public shark's what he is. If he'd been livin' when I come to Californy in '48 we'd stretched his neck until he could've looked into a second story window. That ground's too soft by the back wheel or I could wedge up the frame. And these damned fenders they hang on cars nowadays are in the way. Don't give you a chance to see even if the wheels have dropped off. Wouldn't make much difference if they did. Mighty white of you, boy, to come tell me about Kinley."

"I was lookin' out a bit for myself, too," Lute grinned. "Might get me a bit o' reward money. But you ain't heard about the May boys. Five hundred for 'em, dead or alive, and I got a good tip they headed through here."

Johnnie was crawling around the car again, examining, studying. Even when he had talked so ramblingly his eyes had never been at rest, nor had the words touched his real thoughts. For seventy years he had been talking to burros and to himself, and now he could still talk while every thought and all his energy were concentrated on the problem of freeing his friend.

"Some o' them Calaveras County Mays?" Johnnie asked as he crawled back. "I'd better go get you some water. Had a pint bottle I was savin' but Jennie stepped on it. Hot in the sun. Lute, this thing's got me stumped. Just as soon as I lift her she's liable to come back on top o' you. Damn Sam Kinley. I'd like to get him into these hills once, just to see the rattlesnakes chum up with him. I mind when the Mays came. In that Missouri crowd. Never heard a decent thing about a May in eighty-eight years. Lute, I got to get you out o' this. Somehow! If that hub wasn't on a boulder—Jennie, now, you can work at her same as a Conestoga wagon. What the Mays do?"

"Ab and Kit got drunk four days ago," Lute French said. "Started a fight and killed a man. The chief o' police came in and they shot him and a deputy sheriff. Stole a car and started north.

When a highway cop tried to stop 'em they killed him."

"That always was the hell of it with them Mays," Johnnie Irons said. "Never knew when to stop. Now back in '49 and '50—you think they're headin' through here?"

"They took to the hills afoot and I got a straight tip. Every road and highway is watched. State police, sheriff's posses and about three hundred men out on their own. Never be any trial if they're caught."

"I'll go get you some water, Lute. I've figured out how. Need an ax. A good solid timber under—"

Johnnie was gone, still talking, his thin old legs driving his heavy shoes along the road. Lute French threw an arm across his face to shield it from the blazing sun. After ten minutes he heard Johnnie returning.

"You had a straight tip, Lute," the old man sputtered. Can you lift your head? I got a cold spring and The Mays been there. heard me comin', I guess. Now if they'd give me a hand we'd—Leg hurtin'?"

"It's been numb, but now she's startin' to jump," Lute said. "How you know they were there?"

"Been at my grub and they took my riffle and all the shells. Another drink, Lute? Wish I had some liquor for you. We could stop at Jeff Whelden's place if it was on the way. He always has a bottle cached. 'Fraid o' snakes, Jeff is. If them damned Mays—"

"What about 'em?" a harsh voice came from the brush.

JOHNNIE IRONS did not look up. He was holding Lute's head, that the injured man might drink.

"Come here!" Johnnie commanded. "You stole my gun, so you know I can't shoot you. Give me a hand."

Two men stepped out of the thick manzanita. Neither was more than thirty. Their faces sprouted black stubble that did not cover the drag of fatigue or hard, cruel lines. Their clothes were brush-torn, their shoes dusty and scarred by rocks.

They stood motionless, each with a rifle ready. Their eyes shifted constantly, from Johnnie to Lute to the car, to the road, back again. They were swift, savage eyes that did not betray surprise or concern when they saw Lute French's legs pinned beneath the automobile.

"What you standin' there for?" Johnnie demanded hotly. "Take this ax and cut a pry. We got to work it careful or the hull thing'll come back on him."

One of the men stepped forward and stared down at Lute.

"Deputy sheriff," he said. "Huntin' us, eh?"

"I came up to see Johnnie Irons about a foreclosure on his place," Lute answered. "But I wouldn't have minded turnin' a few dollars my way if I'd met up with you."

"Reward, eh? How much?"

"Five hundred, only—" Lute paused and returned the stare. "Nobody's thinkin' about a reward. Three hundred men's packin' rope."

A shadow crossed Ab May's eyes. Then he laughed.

"Plenty o' trees, but they got to have somethin' at the other end of the rope," he said.

"Every road's watched," Lute said. "Lot of extra highway cops. Besides, hardly a man in your county ain't rakin' the hills. You made a mistake, pickin' off Murray Hodge. No ten police chiefs in the Mother Lode had the friends he did."

Kit May stepped forward.

"To hell with that!" he rasped. "We got to travel."

"Hey!" Johnnie's shrill voice seemed to lift him to his feet. "You ain't in such a damned hurry you can't give

me a hand. Lute's leg is broke—bad."

"One less chasin' us," Kit said.

Johnnie danced before Kit May, shaking thin, knobby fists beneath the slayer's face.

"That's a May for you!" he shrieked. "I knew your great-granddad and your granddad, but I never knew man or woman to say a good word for 'em. A thievin', sneakin', yaller bunch! Too damned bad we didn't use a rope when they come in '49 and cut off the breed before—"

Kit struck him in the face. Johnnie staggered, almost fell. He picked up a rock.

"Nobody ever did that to Johnnie Irons and—"

Kit lifted his rifle to strike with the butt, but Ab stepped between them and knocked the rock from Johnnie's hand.

"Even if we add a couple more, they can only hang us once," Ab said coldly. "Besides, nobody knows we hit through here. Sure not to know if we tap you on the head, old timer, and leave this deputy to watch the buzzards come."

"I'll tap him!" Kit snarled. "He can't shoot off his mouth about the Mays and—"

"Shut up!" Ab barked. "How'd you know we might be around here?'

"I had a straight tip," the deputy said. "Besides, all the highways are watched."

Ab May considered that, and looked at Johnnie.

"So you're Johnnie Irons," he said. "Thought I knew that car. You sleep in the covered part in back?"

"None of your damned business where I sleep!" Johnnie retorted as he pawed at blood oozing from a cheek cut by Kit's fist. "You goin' to help me get Lute free?"

"I been looking at that car," Ab said. "Good rig for the hills. Room for you and all your stuff in behind. Canvas covers it tight, too. And everybody from Mormon Bar to Whiskey Diggin's knows that old wreck Johnnie Irons."

"Yer damned tootin' they all know me!" Johnnie snapped.

Ab May looked at Johnnie, down at Lute French, and up at the intense blue of the California sky.

"Kit," he said, "here's what we'll do. We'll tip this car off'n the sheriff. We'll load him in Irons' car and we'll crawl in with him. Then Irons will drive down to the valley. Nobody'd think to stop him. He could take us right through to Sacramento, even. Chance to get out o' the country."

"If you think I'd lug a couple o' murderin' Mays past a posse!" Johnnie yelled. "I'd see you—"

"Listen, old timer—" The chill in Ab's voice stabbed through the heat of the canyon. "We don't aim to be strung up. We ain't overlookin' any bets, such as leavin' you here to blab. You're goin' to do what I said or never take another step.

"And that ain't all. You'll be drivin' with a gun against the seat o' your pants. One funny move, one sign to a cop, and I pull trigger. And soon's I kill you I kill this deputy. They may get us, but you two'll go first. Understand?"

Johnnie Irons stared fearlessly into Ab's eyes, searching for a sign of weakness. He did not find it. Kit May was moving about nervously, but Ab was cold and still and confident.

"I ain't never goin' to let any bunch o' hell-whoopin' yaps string me up," Ab said.

You got more brains than any May I ever see!" Johnnie exclaimed. "Me, I'm for usin' plenty o' rope. It's what we did in '49. Californy's gettin' hep to itself lately, and if she sticks to the good old way she won't have so many o' your sort runnin' loose. All right! Grab that ax and cut a pry. Think I'm goin' to stand around here all day watchin' Lute suffer?"

"Yeah, but you goin' to behave?"

Kit demanded, his voice a curt whip.

"If I got both feet in a bear trap would I be thinkin' about a Saturday night dance?" Johnnie retorted.

THE Mays searched Lute for a weapon. Ab found a heavy revolver in the car. Then Ab cut two long, stout poles. Johnnie insisted they take some precaution to prevent the car slipping back onto Lute but the Mays brushed him aside, thrust the poles under, braced themselves, heaved.

The car rose, rolled over onto its back, slid, rolled over again, crashed, bounced and hurtled down the steep canyon slope. The Mays watched, a savage zest in their eyes, until it struck a huge sugar pine five hundred feet below.

"That's what I call a good sheriff's car," Ab said.

Johnnie was already on his knees examining Lute's legs.

"One's broke sure!" he exclaimed. "Other seems all right. Cut a bit. I'll go get Jennie."

Ab May accompanied him. Johnnie backed down the old road, excitedly jawing at his ancient car.

"Mind that tree, damn ye! Jennie, ye're the stubbornest jackass I ever prodded in the rump."

"Sure this wreck'll hang together?" Ab asked.

"Jennie and me's been pokin' into these hills for fifteen years and she's never balked yet," Johnnie defended hotly. "She can go any damn place where wheels has been."

The Mays examined the car. In front was half a hood, two uprights that had once held a windshield, and nothing more. The wooden bows of the top were only partly covered by a ragged piece of oilcloth.

"Hate to be caught even drunk in it," Kit snarled.

"That's why it's good," Ab said. "No one's going to search this piece of junk."

Back of the high front seat, from which stuffing and coil springs protruded, was a long, wide platform. On this Johnnie had built a framework less than three feet high. Canvas was stretched over the top and down the front and sides and back. The injured deputy was placed in this shelter.

Ab May crawled in and poked his gun through the seat.

"First queer move's your last," he said.

"You've told me that already," Johnnie retorted. "Lucky for you Lute French's dad and me was partners. We hydraulicked together at You Bet and Red Dog to get a stake, and the very next day after Lute was born we opened up an old diggin' in Shirt tail Canyon that paid us two thousand a week. Lute's got a hold on me. If he hadn't, Jennie and me'd do our best to see two rats strung up. Now we got to get the boy to a doctor."

The road climbed the canyon wall, a steep trail that had not known shovel or scraper for ten years. It narrowed terrifyingly above slopes almost perpendicular, tilted alarmingly from washouts and crumbling sides. The old car clattered and groaned, spit and barked, careened and jolted. Soon it was trailing a white plume from the radiator cap.

"She's soft and that feed's too strong for her," Johnnie explained when he stopped to let the motor cool. "How you feelin', Lute?"

"All right," the deputy answered.

"Next time you stop, hunt some shade," Kit growled.

"Jennie stops where she wants," Johnnie said. "Lift that back flap if you want air. I dast you to."

He chuckled, until a revolver poked through the seat.

"Keep that damned gun away!" Johnnie barked. "You ain't going to use it and I know you ain't. You murderin' rats need me worse'n I need you. Why, damn your pusillanimous souls, I could

dump you down into the North Fork twenty-five hundred feet below here."

"The sheriff'd go with us," Ab said.

"Sure! That's all that's kept' you alive. We got each other by the tail and neither one can let loose. I want to get Lute to a doctor and you want to save your yellow necks from crackin'. I'm rememberin' it, but don't *you* forget it."

The old car reached the top of the grade and again halted, this time in the shade. Johnnie knew how Lute suffered.

"Give the sheriff a drink of water," he said. "The better you take care o' him, the better I take care o' you. If they start crowdin' you, Lute, let me know."

"Keep your trap shut!" Ab May snarled.

"No Pike County whelp can keep me from talkin'," Johnnie retorted. "I've talked for eighty-eight years, an' when there wasn't anyone else around I've talked to my burros and myself, which is a hell of a lot better company than I've got now. And I'll tell you something more, you Missouri hell-hound. If I meet anybody I'll talk to 'em too. Most people knows me and they'd think it funny if I went by without speakin'. I got to make this look like Jennie and me's alone, 'cause I want to get Lute to a doc."

"Keep on thinkin' that, " Ab said.

Johnnie Irons did not reply as his old eyes swept a great circle. To north and south the earth was sharply folded in the deep canyons and high timbered ridges of the Mother Lode. Behind him mountains climbed to high peak and broad snowfield. Beneath Jennie's nose ridges rolled down into hills, and canyons flattened into valleys until they became one with the vast mist-hidden basin of the Sacramento. And strangely sharp beyond that heat haze rose the light blue coast range, one hundred and fifty miles to the west.

As a gardener knows weeds and flowers, Johnnie knew the men of his mountains. Somewhere in his country he must find help, for he understood that neither he nor Lute would live, once he got the Mays through the lines. Suddenly he felt old and tired and a little frightened. His foot eased on the throttle and Jennie shuddered.

"Keep going!" Ab hissed.

"It's Jennie," the old man answered. "She ain't feeling so good. But we hit a decent road pretty soon, and ten miles of it will take us to the highway."

"Keep away from that!" Ab barked.

"But I got to cross it," Johnnie insisted. "Five miles and I cut north on old roads again. Can follow those quite a bit before we hit another highway."

"All right," Ab said. "But I've got a gun in your pants and Kit's stuck his in the sheriff's ear."

Johnnie kicked Jennie into motion.

THE dim tracks followed the ridge, then turned down and joined a road smoothed by a scraper. It's dust had been ground by many tires as it twisted into a canyon and climbed a low ridge beyond. Abruptly Jennie turned her wobbly feet to the broad black ribbon of a main highway.

"Easy, girl!" Johnnie cautioned. Don't go slippin' and slidin' with 'em smooth shoes 'o yourn. And don't get skittery when those shiny things go zippin' by. Maybe they're traveling sixty, but they'd scrape their guts out if they tried to follow you in the hills."

Johnnie opened the throttle cautiously. Jennie's every bone shivered and rattled. The speedometer needle vibrated between fifty and sixty. This, Johnnie knew, indicated about twelve. The grade was gentle, though constant. The road wound down in mathematical curves that ignored shoulders of ridges and gullies. One of these curves brought Jennie face to face with a uniformed highway patrolman standing in the mid-

dle of the pavement with upraised hand. Jennie groaned to a stop.

The patrolman was young. His features were cleanly chiseled, but fatigue pulled at them and his eyes were hard, almost savage. A revolver hung low on a hip.

The patrolman came forward, striding blindly into quick death.

"If you think I'm speedin', why'n you stop some of them fancy bandboxes I met up the road?" the old man exploded with sudden fury.

"Shush down, old timer," the cop said. "I got to search your rig."

"Search me!" Anger lifted Johnnie's voice to a cracked scream. "What the hell right you got to search me? Why, you damned unshavable cub, take your diapers off before you start talkin' to Johnnie Irons. I come to Californy in '48. I cut the trails your great-granddad was hauled in by. I been roamin' these hills from Feather River to the Chowchilla since your granddad was squawkin' in a crib. Ask any sheriff in the Mother Lode about Johnnie Irons. Ask 'em if anybody ever had cause to stop me, or if I ever was stopped. Now take your foot off that wheel, 'cause I'm goin'. Jennie's blind and I got to travel by daylight."

The patrolman was unmoved by the tirade, and there was much more of it. He stared steadily into Johnnie's irate old eyes, and suddenly, with a gesture of futility, he waved Jennie on.

A mile farther Johnnie turned onto a dim road that dropped into a canyon. At the bottom it forded a brook and Johnnie stopped. Despite Ab's command, he climbed down.

"I'm gettin' Lute a drink," Johnnie said gruffly. "Suppose I got to pack water for you rattlesnakes too."

"Who was that stopped you?" Ab asked.

"One of them hell-roarin' speed fellows."

"You did a good job."

"Yeah, and why?" Johnnie demanded furiously. "Damned fine lookin' boy. Maybe he knows the one you two rats killed. Think I was goin' to let him lift that back flap and step right into boiling hell? That's why I did it. And I'll try to do it again on the next piece of highway we got to cross soon's as we turn off this road."

"I told you to stay off highways."

"You're trying to get north, ain't you? And I'm tryin to get Lute to a doctor. How you feel, Lute."

"I'm getting by," the deputy said.

"I'll get you a drink soon at Jeff Whelden's."

"You're not stopping," Ab said.

"What's the use of arguin' with a damn fool!" Johnnie exploded. "If Jeff's to home he'll be on his front steps within ten feet of the road. If I went by without stoppin' he'd think I'd lost my mind and he'd come pilin' after me in that old wreck of a car of his and call out folks to help catch me. Best way to get folks to wonderin' about what's in this car would be to pass Jeff up."

Johnnie buttoned down the flap and climbed stiffly to his seat. His legs ached, his back ached, his hands ached from their grip on the whipping wheel. His eyes blurred sometimes. Heat beat through his thin shirt. Johnnie was very old.

FOR an hour Jennie whined and creaked on a tortuous trail. Then she reached a well tended clay road. Telephone wires were strung at one side. The canyon floor widened. The shade of pines was refreshing. A river rested in green pools before racing on. Johnnie quit talking to himself and to Jennie. He held his breath as he rounded a turn and entered a street with houses on both sides, houses that leaned wearily or stared, like skulls, through glassless windows. No dogs barked. No children called. The sense of dissolution was com-

pleted by an aged, motionless figure on the steps of the last house. Jennie drew to a stop and sighed.

Jeff Whelden was very tall and thin. His face was long and creased by deep lines. Black, keen eyes, the only live thing about the man, glared through long, bushy brows like a sheep dog's. They glared at Johnnie for a long time.

"You damned old useless string o' rawhide!" Johnnie burst forth at last. "Those knees o' yourn set so you can't unbend 'em? You sit there in the sun much longer an' you better chain yourself down or a breeze'll drape you over them telephone wires."

Jeff did not look from Johnnie's face.

"Jennie's got a soft shoe," he said. "Off front foot."

"I'm damned!" Johnnie exclaimed. "Thought she'd been favorin' it last mile or two. Kept workin' off the road. Get me your pump, Jeff. Mine's busted."

Jeff Wheldon unfolded himself slowly and went into the house. Johnnie climbed down and kicked the soft tire.

"Fill her up and she'll last." he growled. "Got to."

The two old men took turns creaking valiantly over the pump until their feet would bounce off the hard tire. Johnnie climbed back to his seat.

"Ain't you goin' to stop?" Jeff asked.

"Can't," Johnnie snapped. "Got to get far as I can before dark. That blood-suckin' Kinley's foreclosed on me."

"Then what you come round this way for?"

"Speed cops raisin' hell on the highway."

For the first time expression altered Jeff Whelden's face. He beat his bony thighs and laughter roared from him.

"Needn't be so damned cocky!" Johnnie Irons shouted. "Jennie can out run that wreck o' yourn. These cops know I'm a safe driver, but they're stopping everybody lookin' for them bloody-pawed May brothers."

"Must have been some young squirts who didn't know you," Jeff said dryly.

"That's what I told one," Johnnie answered. "If I'd let him, he'd 'a searched me. As though I'd tote those damned dirty killers even at the point of a gun. Sure told that kid what I thought o' him."

Johnnie's cackle was the same high pitch but his eyes were bleak and staring straight into Jeff's.

Something flashed in Jeff's eyes but he chuckled when he spoke. "You always could tell 'em." Then his glance shifted swiftly to the canvas cover over the rear of Johnnie's car.

Johnnie nodded, though very slightly. He knew there were holes in that cover. One was on a side, but whether toward Jeff or not he could not remember.

"I got to be goin'," Johnnie said. "Jennie can't see to travel after dark so I'll have to camp. Started soon's Lute French told me Kinley had foreclosed. You mind Martin French, him I was partners with in Shirttail? Lute's his son. Deputy sheriff, which is how he heard about Kinley. White of him."

Johnnie's gnarled old hands gripped the wheel. Now he brought one up to his throat. Swiftly it made a slashing gesture, and then as it went back to the wheel three stiff fingers stuck out. Johnnie's head jerked toward the rear of his car. Jeff Whelden watched without expression. Only his eyes were alert, and he spoke quickly to cover the silence.

"Comin' back this way?"

"That's one thing I stopped for. Most forgot it. Worryin' about Kinley's dirty tricks, maybe. But I ain't doin' so well this summer, and I thought maybe you'n me could go prospectin' 'long Deadman's Creek. We never did go back after we found that ledge just above the flat. And if we make a strike, Jeff, we'll call it Hoot Owl. Mind the racket they raised the night we stayed there? You wanted to shoot 'em. You had a shootin' spell on then. We'd just

had a battle with them claim jumpers below Alpha and Omega. You was all for goin' back to dry gulch 'em, but they'd shot Mike Scanlon and we had to get him away. We sure raised a lot of hell when we was partners, Jeff."

"You was the hell raiser," Jeff retorted. "Still are, from the looks o' your face. Who you been fightin'?"

"That was Jennie," Johnnie said. "Damn her old soul! She didn't want to start today. Walloped me when I took the crank to her."

A revolver prodded the seat of Johnnie's overalls.

"Cushion's gettin' wore through!" he exclaimed as he jumped. "Got to be goin'. Tie up that old contraption o' yourn with some more hay wire and be ready to go prospectin' on Deadman's Creek."

Jennie shrieked herself into motion. When she turned the first bend in the road her driver looked back. Jeff Whelden was again sitting motionless on his front steps.

Johnnie glanced anxiously at the telephone wires overhead. Jeff was a watchman for the company, had a phone in his house. There had been a time when all Jeff needed was a glance, a word and a shrug, and he could get the whole picture. Now Johnnie wondered how dulled a man became from age.

Suddenly Jennie's driver was very tired. The wheel jerked at his thin arms. His legs trembled from operating the clutch and the brake. He had tried so hard, and he knew now that he himself was old.

THEY struck another highway and followed it for a few miles. Cars whizzed past, but never a uniformed man on a motorcycle. Discouraged, his old body aching, Johnnie turned westward on a deeply rutted road. After a mile he pulled off. The sun had set. In an open space beside a creek, with a ridge rising beyond, Jennie came to a halt and her driver climbed down.

Ab May lifted the rear flap, peered around cautiously, slid out.

"I've driv far's as I can," Johnnie announced wearily. "Jennie's got a tough mount."

"Where are we?"

"Never heard it give a name. I've camped here before on account of water. But what I figure is to cross the main highway west o' here soon's it's light in the morning and then work into the valley by back roads. Once down there—"

"You're getting mighty anxious about us all of a sudden," Ab said.

"Hell, no! It's Lute I'm thinkin about. This night out ain't goin' to do that leg no good. Sooner I can get him—"

"How about us?"

"If it hadn't been for me and Jennie you'd never 'a gotten this far. And that highway west of us is goin' to be full of deputies tomorrow."

"We don't have to wait till tomorrow," Kit cut in. "We can walk as fast as that piece of junk can travel."

Johnnie flared. "Jennie can outwalk any May that ever was born. And the whole country ain't packin' rope to tie around her neck, either."

"Shut up!" Ab snarled. "Let's eat. Kit, watch this old bird while he cooks supper. I'm going to look around."

It was dark when Ab returned. Lute was lying on a mattress at the edge of the creek bank. Johnnie was frying bacon.

The two brothers ate ravenously. For four days and nights they had been running. Even now their heads lifted frequently and their jaws halted as their nerves tightend. Johnnie watched them scornfully.

"You're skittery as wild horses," he said with disgust. "If a woodpecker was to start drillin' on that dead pine you'd jump right out o' your hides."

"I'm tired o' his yappin'," Kit said. "I'm goin' to stick the old hog now. You can have the sheriff. You always did like 'em."

Ab May considered the proposal. In the firelight his face was utterly ruthless.

Johnnie Irons glanced at it. He had never expected mercy, had hoped only for delay.

Ab leaped to his feet. The stillness had been broken by the hoot of an owl.

"Never see such a place for 'em!" Johnnie exclaimed. "Every time I ever camped here they start up."

Johnnie walked to the trembling hands spilled some on the dying blaze and he growled curses at his awkwardness.

"Have some more, boys?" he said, and he filled the Mays' cups.

"Ab," he said, "you got sense. Least like a May I ever saw. More coffee, Lute?"

He had turned quickly. Ab's face was scarcely discernible as the fire fought for new life. Then another owl hooted. Johnnie waited, poised. A shaft of light slashed through the trees and picked out Ab. Johnnie hurled the steaming coffee into the killer's face.

More light beams cut lanes among the trees. Johnnie Irons did not see them, for he had tumbled to his knees beside Lute French. His stiff old hands grasped the mattress, heaved, pushed. Lute was rolled over and down the cut bank. Johnnie slid after him. Rifles were speaking.

"That hurt your leg, Lute?" Johnnie whispered in his friend's ear. "Hated to do it, but 'twas the only way."

"If you'd 'a' broken it off, Johnnie, I'd be laughin'," Lute answered.

A body crashed down near them. Shooting ceased and footsteps and gruff commands took its place. Lights flickered among the tree trunks and soon picked out Johnnie and Lute.

"There's the old Forty-Niner!" Jeff Whelden called as Johnnie lifted his head. "His car ain't worth a damn, but he gets around pretty well spite of it."

"You all right, Lute?" a voice asked anxiously.

"Sure, Sheriff. You got here quick. They was makin' ready to knife us."

"They'll never knife anybody," the sheriff said harshly. "Kit, the young 'un, quit when we pinked an arm. This one, he'll live to hang, too. Have 'em in Folsom prison in two hours."

"Fine!" Lute exclaimed. "Lynchin'd be too quick and gentle for this pair. Jeff call you?"

"Soon's Johnnie drove away. We wouldn't believe him at first. Nobody thought the killers'd come out this way."

Lute was lifted tenderly to the top of the bank and a doctor went to work on his legs. Men gathered around Johnnie, asking questions.

"No doubt as to where that reward goes," one said. "You earned it, Mr. Irons."

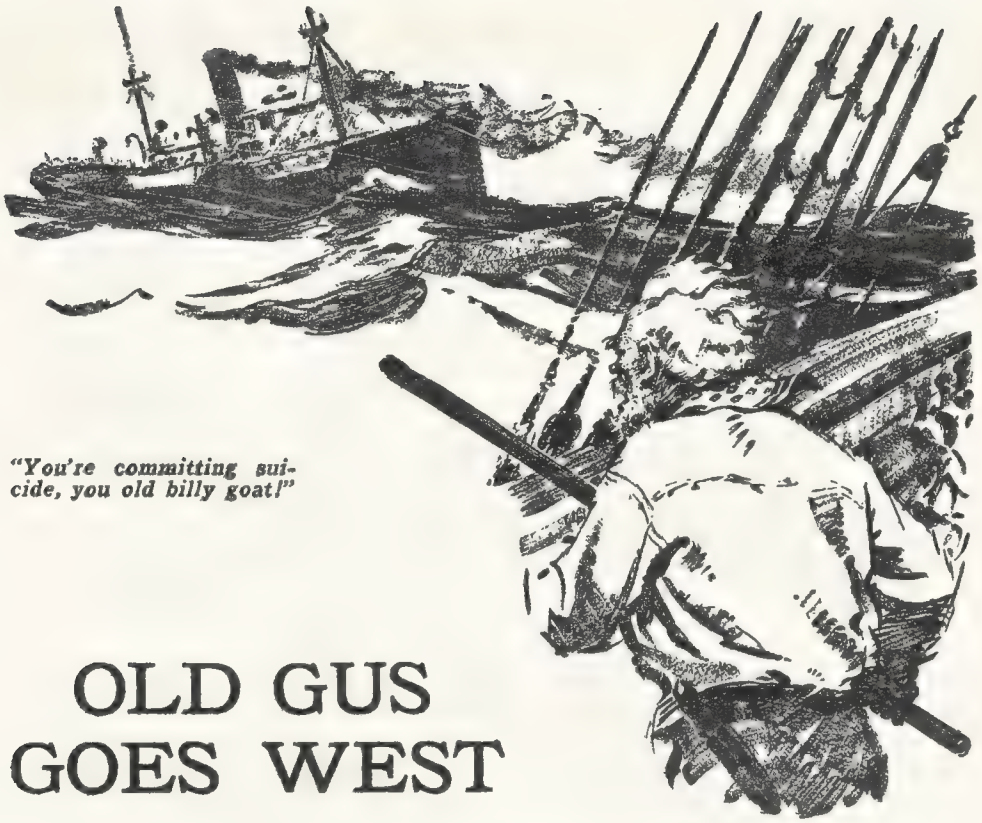
"Hell, no!" Johnnie protested. "Anything I did wouldn't 'a' counted at all if Jeff hadn't been smart. Besides, he's old. Can't get around the hills any more and he needs the money."

"Why, you damned old hunk o' dried up jackass hide!" Jeff bellowed. "And that ain't all. You claimed you and me was partners once and camped here in Deadman's Creek. Said it while the Mays was listenin', too. I never was partners with you, and don't you go claimin' it again."

"You're tootin', we never was partners!" Johnnie agreed hotly. "Most choked me to say it."

"You're partners now," the sheriff chuckled. "I'm going to see this reward is split between you. And you'll need it, Johnnie, to get clear of Kinley."

"Well, maybe," Johnnie conceded. "Tell you, Jeff. You buy some liquor with your half and I'll come visit you. We'll race our cars for the drinks."



"You're committing suicide, you old billy goat!"

OLD GUS GOES WEST

BY BURT SHURTLEFF

OLD GUS, picking himself up from the icy sidewalk in front of Hagan's saloon, was devoid of resentment. Having been tossed out of half the waterfront saloons of the world in just the same fashion, he cared little for the humiliation. If there was only a welcome glass of fiery whiskey somewhere along that bleak Seattle wharfage, he could yet drown his despair.

Tacking unsteadily on feeble old legs, he passed the end of the slip without seeing her. Then he glanced over the top of the piles of rusty scrap iron and recognized those masts and yards.

Instantly hope flowed through him, warming his old frame. A grin spread across the gaunt face. Eagerly he staggered into the yard and out upon the sagging pier.

Luckily for Old Gus there was nobody on duty at the wharf, the guard having slipped across the street for a glass of something hot. The old sailor, out of work because shipping offices ignored him for younger men, beamed at the old *Cariomareus*, lying tied to the end of the pier.

But it was no mere love for a fine ship, now cast on the scrap heap, that sent him scrambling up the gangplank. Old Gus was looking for something dear to his heart, something that he hoped might still be left aboard the rusty hulk.

Years before Gus had served aboard that old bark. No longer useful in trade because she was out-moded by steamers, the vessel had lain beyond the twelve-mile limit with a cargo of liquor, selling to swifter craft that dared to run the blockade to land. Her captain and owner had built her many years before and had constructed deep within her hull a secret compartment which he had used

on many a voyage for smuggling costly gifts past customs officials.

When the Old Man was decidedly mellowed, out there on station, he had confided his secret to Old Gus and taken him down to sample the large barrel of real whiskey that he kept there for his own consumption. It was the memory of that barrel that sent the old sailor scurrying aboard now.

There was some hope, he knew, that the cask was still there. Violence had ended the career of the Old Man and nearly ended the life of Gus and the *Cariomarcus* at the same time. Hi-jackers had swarmed aboard, after pretending to come to buy, had killed the skipper, almost brained Gus, and made off with the cargo of bad whiskey. The Coast Guard Cutter had found the bark adrift and towed her to a wharf, where she had been rusting away ever since, sending the murdered man to the morgue and Gus to a hospital.

Now the old sailor hurried below to the secret niche with hope warming his chilled body. It was doubtful if the hi-jackers had found that secret compartment under the cabin decking. That barrel might still be lying there in its secret cubby, full of prime whiskey.

It was dark in the cabin and still darker in that hole he finally exposed, but Old Gus still retained his sense of feeling, could depend more on that than on his failing sight. He slid down quickly and groped for the cask.

He had barely assured himself that the barrel was still full, when a mighty slam and crash on the deck far above him announced that he was not alone aboard the craft. The harpies who were undoubtedly cutting her down for junk iron were back from lunch and at work again.

Old Gus grinned and stuck his head under the spigot. The little wooden handle turned under his big fingers. Hot whiskey trickled into his mouth and was eagerly gulped into his stomach.

Warmth permeated outward from that fiery libation. He no longer shook with the cold. Even numb fingers and toes began to glow.

Then he cocked his head suddenly on one side to listen. There were steps in the cabin immediately over his head. His groping fingers slid the panel shut silently just before the light flashed on.

"So I got insurance on her, for she's as sound and dry as ever. Now she's almost loaded and ready. You understand?"

"Sure," replied a thick voice. "Instead o' cuttin' her down here, where labor is high, you send her over afloat, to be chopped up by cheap Jap hands. And on top of that you load her with iron what she's got to carry for you, instead of bein' carried herself. Like makin' a dead man drag his own hearse."

The first speaker laughed. Then his voice dropped.

"That was the idea, first off. I found a tramp steamer ready to tow her at a price would make me money. But I got more insurance than I expected I could get on her. This old hull is so sound she's good for a barge for years and years yet."

"Yeah, but there ain't no cargo to bring back to make a barge pay."

Again that taunting laugh. Old Gus felt his hair prickle at the back of his neck as it always did when he was displeased.

Somehow he didn't like that laugh, was glad he had decided to consume that whiskey in secret instead of sharing it with the owner.

"You don't get the idea, dimwit. I insure ship and cargo. I can't get quite so much insurance for the cargo as I can get cash for it delivered in Yokohama—but I get a lot more on the bottom than she is worth there for junk."

"But high insurance means you pay a lot more premium."

"And I collect a lot more—*when* she sinks."

Old Gus felt his great hands clench into fists in the darkness. Being a true lover of ships, he had the sailor's hatred for a man who would deliberately plan barratry.

"You mean," howled the listener above Gus's head, "that you want me to take out a barge you know is going to sink?"

"You got nothing to risk. The first blow you run into, you open the seacocks and push off in the boat, after you signal the steamer to stand by and pick you up. You got no watches to stand then and no work to do—and you collect your pay for the whole trip *and* a hundred dollars bonus. Nobody's got to know that you opened them cocks but you. You sound her holds and find she's leakin' fast, so you abandon her."

There was a long silence in the cabin. Somewhere in the darkness a rat squeaked. The faint lap of the harbor wash against the hull echoed through the still air.

"I got to provision her just like she was goin' to make the whole trip," moaned the owner, "or somebody's goin' to get suspicious and squeal to the insurance campany. But we save on towage. I got a contract for towin' that figures actual miles covered. The quicker you sink her, the better."

They finished their negotiations and went scuffling toward the deck. Old Gus thought of staggering ashore to denounce them to the insurance company. There might be some kind of reward for bringing in such a sweet pair. But the reward would never buy any better whiskey than he had available at his elbow. He must take another good snorter of that to give him the strength.

His hand gripped the spigot for a long time. Once he turned the handle enough to halt the flow, shook his head partially clear, and solemnly decided that he needed another to add courage to strength.

When he finally stopped in order to gasp a little air, he felt that a third mighty swig should clear his conscience concerning the right and wrong of carrying such information to the authorities.

That third ended only when his last vestige of consciousness warned him to give a powerful heave to the little wooden handle to make sure none of the whiskey was lost while he closed his eyes a few seconds for a much needed nap.

THE familiar swank and slosh of a ship riding open water aroused him. He sat up so quickly that he bumped his head resoundingly on the deck beam above. Rubbing that and wondering about his situation, he remembered what was afoot.

"You make a fine coffin," he chuckled, patting the rusty steel with a clumsy paw, "and Old Goos be proud to be buried in you. Ve don' need no flowers. Dis whiskey be enough bookay."

Appreciating his own humor, he had to have another drink on that. He struck the barrel with his knuckles, grinning to find it full.

Stooping for a second draft, he had the unhappy thought that there was too much whiskey in the cask. It would be a shame to go to his grave companioned by gallons and gallons of unconsumed liquor.

"I guess," he grinned at the darkness, "I got to vatch dis ol' ship. She can't sink vhile I got goot whiskey to drink."

Too canny to be caught so drunk that he could not carry out the plan that was forming in his mind, Old Gus limited himself for untold hours. While the old ship butted her way steadily into the seas in response to that tugging at her bow, he rationed himself heroically to barely enough drink to keep himself happily mulled.

His ears, attuned to every noise that a ship should make under every circum-

stance, waited for that rush of water to forecast trouble.

It seemed forever that he lay there, fighting his temptation, battling to keep alive long enough to consume the very last drop of whiskey. He was fairly saturated with alcohol and his system was ticking away beautifully. He fairly glowed with alcoholic warmth and the feeling of virtue at this self-denial. Sometimes he grinned for hours or just lay there chuckling contentedly. This was the way to die.

He knew when it was coming. The pitch and roll had increased. Even down there under the stern he could feel her swanking progress slow and her side motion increase as the waves and the wind roared under and over her.

He heard the first gush of the inrushing seas, listened attentively until it changed to a silence that would have terrified a weaker man, as the flood raised above the open cocks. Already the old hull was staggering with a different motion as she wallowed into the seas.

Soon he heard the clatter of feet in the cabin above him and the excited call of voices.

"Get whatever you want to take of your dunnage, Bill. She's takin' water fast. We're shovin' off in the boat and the steamer's standin' by for us. She'll be goin' down any minute."

Old Gus waited until the hurried steps were gone. Then he slid from his prison into the cabin, from the cabin into the narrow passage that he knew led to the holds. His mind was clear now and his old limbs strong. Charged like a storage battery with the alcohol that fairly permeated his whole system, he was a young man again in ability.

The hold was a welter of rushing water when he finally reached it, but he plunged into the swirling, swashing flood and labored toward the big wheel. The sea was icy, but he was filled with so much fiery whiskey that nothing could chill him. He even allowed himself a snatch of song, aware that nobody could hear him on deck above the noisy hurry of departure.

A savage roll of the ship buried him beneath a surge of water. Snorting, he fought his way up, bumped his head on a deck beam, and cursed so volubly that the water almost strangled him. Then the bark canted at another angle and he gulped clear air into his lungs with a sputter that exhausted the water before he gulped.

His hands found the wheel at last and cranked eagerly. The rush about his feet slowed. Waist deep in the brine, he took his bearings as best he could in the complete darkness and staggered to starboard. The port cock was closed. There remained but the one other.

He searched diligently as the water steadily rose around him. The delay would give the escaping men assurance that she was going to continue her settling, but it might end on failure to find that wheel.

Another roll sent the imprisoned water down over him. This time he had presence of mind enough to shut his mouth on the oaths that leaped to his tongue. He held his breath until he thought he would burst before he finally felt the water recede.

This time he found the cock and screwed it tight. Then he groped off to find the ladder. He climbed to the succeeding cargo decks with a fresh singing at his heart. He had to get back to his stimulation for a little more warming influence, but otherwise he was all right. The deserting crew must have left by now. He must be in sole command.

The idea tickled him. This was the way a man should go. His grandfather had told him how the vikings went, propped up in death aboard a boat, sailing out to oblivion into a stormy sea. But this had the viking idea all licked. Sailing out alive in a grand old bark, a

barrel of whiskey for his own private consumption, a whole gallant ship at his command.

"By gar," he cackled, "I get to be a skipper at last. I vait a long time, but I get my ship at last."

The idea made him desist from letting that stream run incessantly. His barrel of whiskey would do him no more good than the keg of wine could do one of those dead vikings if he didn't survive to drain it.

He shuddered at the thought of letting good whiskey go untasted to the bottom. Staggering to the deck, he peered into the gathering night. The davits were swung out and the falls were dragging. Although he peered into the dusk for a long time he could discover no sign of the tug. Not a single light of any description pricked that blackness of heaving sea and driving rain and lowering sky.

Well aware of the possibilty of collision unless the riding lights were up, he went shambling off to do his duty. Soon red and green paths gleamed across the water, followed by a white all around light aloft.

Grunting satisfaction, he faced a new responsibility. The bark was canted far over, held on a tack by the force of that wind in her taut canvas and the weight of the water deep within her holds.

He surveyed her standing gear with the eye of a man who knew his ships. Those few sails, raised as much to make her manageable as to aid her on her way, were of good canvas. Unless it blew a gale, they would survive.

He tramped aft with a new swing to his legs. He no longer felt old and feeble, a cast-off of no use to the world. After all those years of abuse and misery, he was at last in command. The feeling of importance was almost as invigorating as the whiskey.

He found the wheel free and bound it with an expert eye gauging wind and sea. If the weather increased, he would have to lower some of that canvas, although he disliked to do that because he knew it would be an impossible task to raise it again unaided.

While he worked he bawled orders to himself in the most approved bucko style and chuckled as he gave answers.

"Da t'ing I like about dis yob," he informed the close-reefed spanker, "is dat when I vant to qvit I can qvit und nobody kick my behint for doin' it. And vhen I vant a drink I can go below und drink all da vhiskey I vant."

The night wore away at last with the canvas still in place. The wind died with dawn into the steady northeast trade that sent the old *Cariomarcus* steadily westward.

"Dat's good," decided Gus, who knew his oceans from first hand experience. "I get me below dat Havaii route und I stay yoost above dem fool doldrums und I sail me arount und arount. I got a big ocean to play vit'. Give me luck und I lick dat whiskey yet."

HE DID not succeed in crossing the steamer lane without being sighted. The inquiring toot of a steamer's horn brought him to deck to blink at a passenger liner lying alongside. The third day after he had taken over command, it was.

"Anything wrong aboard?" bellowed a uniformed monkey in gold braid as a thousand curious passengers peered from the towering decks.

"Do ve look like ve got a distress signal flyin'?" snorted Old Gus. "When I vant help, I let you know."

Somebody tittered along that deck high above him. Old Gus bristled.

"I vould race you to vhere you're goin', you smug yumpin'-yack," roared Gus in sudden anger, "only I'm too busy. Run avay und leave me. I got my rights on dis ocean."

"*Cariomarcus,*" called another voice,

"why, she's reported sunk! Out of Seattle for Yokohama under tow, she was supposed to have foundered."

"I'm yoost a ghost, you bloody fool," cackled Gus, reeling toward the cabin and waving a derisive farewell. "Dis is yoost another Flyin' Dutchman, only I'm a gallopin' Svede. You tell 'em dat in Seattle. It's Goos, Old Goos vhat get t'rowed out of Hagan's bar and into command of a fine old bark. Tell 'em dat in Seattle."

Nobody saw the old bark again for three weeks. Meanwhile a suspicious insurance company had radioed the shipping of the Pacific on receipt of the liner's message to be on the lookout for the *Cariomarcus* and her mysterious master.

Fortunately for the temporary happiness of Old Gus, the little island steamer that hailed him knew nothing of all this, having no wireless. But the steamer reached a port soon afterward and added to the mystery by claiming to have spoken to an affable old Swede who seemed to be in sole command of the big bark as she slowly surged westward before the languid but steady northeast trade.

Meanwhile Old Gus, who knew nothing whatever of any kind of navigation, continued his blissful way. He ate but sparingly, although there was a sufficient supply of food aboard, for he begrudged the space the food occupied in his stomach, since it could not be filled at the same time with whiskey.

He slept peacefully and frequently, leaving the matter of evading collisions to better manned ships. At times he lurched to the deck and surveyed the sea with the important swagger he had learned from watching scores of skippers. At times he toyed with the wheel, or stood staring at the filled canvas.

When bad weather threatened he drank a little heavier to fortify himself against the danger, and when the weather cleared, he drank a little harder to make sure the whiskey didn't win in this battle to outlive each other.

A storm threatened to dismast him or tear his canvas away the sixth week, so he lowered the foresail and let it lie on deck, lashed to the yard, which he had cut away in despair of ever raising it again. When a sea finally carried it away he felt relieved, not liking the slovenly appearance of the decks with rope and canvas strewn about.

The spanker blew out of her bolts and off into the darkness in a howling gale some two weeks later. He felt a little sorry to see it go, for he sensed that it lent charm to a ship to see some canvas on her, but he was already getting a hollow sound when he thumped his cask with speculative fist and his spirit was content. Long before he swung northward with the season's change and picked up the eastern swing of wind and current that would head him back toward the States, that whiskey should be gone.

But now an overwhelming desire to live and boast of his success flooded over him. No longer content to consume the remaining whiskey before death, he felt an urge to sit and spin long yarns of his great voyage to incredulous listeners. He had a suspicion that he was the only man in the world ever to sail a whole shipload of iron halfway across the Pacific Ocean.

The desire to live to tell of his mighty prowess sent him back to the pumps. He had worked at them from time to time during the first weeks, more by way of giving himself orders and watching them carried out than through any real intent of pumping her dry. But now his new dream included a safe arrival somewhere. There would be no boast in piling a ship on the rocks or burying her in the sand. He must locate an anchorage.

The thought sobered him in more ways than one. He had no chart, no way of discovering his whereabouts. He merely

knew that he had been sailing more or less westward for some weeks. Drift, headway, leeway were all mere terms to him as far as using them to know his location was concerned. Bowditch, even when available, was a jumble of printed figures to him, as indecipherable as Chinese or Japanese characters.

"Yapan," he insisted, scratching his thin thatch and staring westward, "is off yon. I t'ink I hit him somvhere near if yoost keep sailin'. If I miss Yapan I hit China and vork back. I got plenty time."

THE weather became squally. One by one the headsails split into ribbons and frayed away. There was but one left and that one he decided to save at all cost.

When the wind threatened to increase, he lowered the rag and stowed it by dint of mighty labor. Then, when the wind lessened, he confronted the herculean task of raising it again or drifting bare-poled.

"Nobody goin' to praise a sailor vhat yoost drift," he decided and set about getting that canvas up.

Six men could have yanked it into place in a trice in response to a good chanty. Old Gus, fortified by plenty of powerful whiskey, assured himself that he was as strong as two ordinary men, but those two could not budge the canvas beyond lifting its peak a few feet.

He set to work to study the situation and take account of stock. Long years at sea had taught him much of how to ease labor. Although he knew nothing of navigation, seamanship and rigging problems were as nothing to him.

There were plenty of old blocks hanging and slatting everywhere, enough oil to get them into working order, enough rope and cable to be utilized for even the most involved leverage problems. Expert old fingers reaved running splices that would send ropes through blocks without binding. With much scratching of the thin thatch, he determined where the blocks should be placed for the most strategic pull. With a maze that reached from bowsprit to foremast, from port rail to starboard, he finally picked his way over a webwork that looked as if he had set out to cord the forward deck for a giant's old fashioned bed.

Squinting, he heaved upon his rope. The slack came in. Blocks creaked. Rope stretched with bitter complaints. Singing out a chanty that he had heard on many a tall-sticked craft, he heaved and heaved, feet braced, body bent far backward to the pull.

The old staysail inched upward reluctantly, filled, billowed far. Grinning, he made it fast.

Thus he established himself as master of the weather. When dying winter smacked at him from any quarter with a blast that threatened to tear his last remaining rag of canvas away, he lowered it. Then the *Cariomarcus* wallowed and pitched and rolled in the troughs or on the slanting billows, her staunch hull seemingly impervious to the rack and strain. With all hatches battened, Old Gus took to his retreat during the bad weather, drank his whiskey, and trusted to the sharper eyes of younger mariners to avoid collision. When the weather cleared, he went back to his complicated hoisting apparatus and made sail again.

AIDED by the westward sweeping current and the prevailing trade wind from the northeast, the bark drifted and sailed steadily westward. The power that watches the sparrow seemed to guide him past such islands as lay in his route and kept him from the most violent storm centers. Derelicts without a single soul aboard have been known to drift for years about the world, and the *Cariomarcus* was supplied with a determined master, plentifully provisioned with food and whiskey.

At times a storm would hurl the ship a few miles backward, but time was nothing to either ship or man. One hope and one only had grown upon him with his desire to win through safely with the old craft.

Those men he had heard plotting to sink the *Cariomarcus* were a pair of ship murderers. His mind had fastened upon a determination to see those men punished for their efforts. A growing conviction formed that he was being preserved to mete out justice upon them. If he could manage to save the bark from grounding and pounding to pieces, he might insure their punishment.

A Chinese junk, crossing his bow one late afternoon, determined a change in course.

"Ve must coom close to China," he nodded, brushing his moustache away with a slow motion that bespoke contemplation. "Now ve head up for Yapan."

The great sweep of current and wind set in northward and the lumbering old ship went along in the direction Old Gus desired without the necessity of much tacking.

At times she swept sideways, her wake a broad roil of slick astern as she logged a bare two or three knots. At other times he either held the wheel or kept it lashed, so that she ran before a stiff breeze, with that single headsail and her hull scooting her along at nearer five or six.

After the island trading steamer reported her, no word of the bark reached the attuned ears of civilization for weeks. The insurance company refused to settle with the angry owner, basing a claim on the failure of owner to prove destruction of the bark.

The Chinese junk neither recognized nor reported the phenomenon. The course of the ship did not cross any particularly active steamer lane until some twelve weeks after she had left Seattle. Then a Yokohama to Hawaii to San Francisco liner sighted her, but there was no signal of distress flying and she merely reported the incident. The old bark was poking along at that time under a single bit of rag, but there was somebody at the wheel who waved a greeting as the liner tore past.

Hurricane signals were out across the whole Pacific when a freighter sighted the bark. Having heard something of the mystery of the iron ship that had defied the wooden men who manned her and claimed she had sunk, the skipper of the tramp ran alongside and hailed the rusty relic.

Since no one answered his hail, he started to put a boat over, scenting possible salvage. But long before the boat was lowered in the rising sea, a single figure was spotted glowering from the high rail.

"Go avay," roared Old Gus. "I vant sea room. I can't han'le dis boat in close qvarters."

"Want a tow?"

"I do not. I sail her myself."

"There's a hurricane coming. You'll be swamped."

Old Gus shook a fist at this deprecation of his craft.

"I'm putting over a boat. I'll take you off and put a salvage crew aboard her. Then I'll tow into Yokohama. If we hurry we might beat that blow."

Old Gus snorted. Elbows wide, great hands hanging like half formed fists, he heaved to the roll of his ship.

"You salvage noddin', you old sea robber," he roared. "I salvage dis ship und cargo by myself. If you vant to tow me ve make a bargain, but I'm under steerage."

Any master of a windjammer these days would take advantage of towing or pilotage, he assured himself by way of salving his wounded vanity at having to admit he could not make port alone. Then he stiffened at the answer.

"Snap wise to yourself, you square-

headed fool! There's a hurricane lashing this way as fast as the wind'll carry it. Inside of twenty-four hours you and your blasted rust scale will be in Davy Jones' locker. Stand by to drop into the boat I'm sending."

"Stand by to repel boarders," roared Old Gus as if to a full crew. "Pass out dem goons. Look lifely. Ve got to safe de ship."

He scrambled for the cabin, picked up the weapon he had salvaged from the scrap iron in the holds for use under just such circumstances, and hurried back to the deck. The men busy swinging out the steamer's boat stared down at him. The ominous barrel of a gun was poking at them over the rail.

"You're committin' suicide, you old billy boat," snarled the skipper.

"Better I drown vit' my command dan starve to deat' ashore. Dat salvage is mine. If you vant a little towage ve make a bargain."

"I'm makin' no bargains. I'll stand by until you beg for a line."

"Den I see you in hell," roared Gus.

The wind and sea picked up as they tossed side by side. The bark pitched and slatted and logged her customary two to five knots before the increasing wind. From time to time a sea flooded over her low decks and cascaded from her red sides in creamy white, but Old Gus stuck to his decision.

Tucking into a belaying pin rack the short section of rusty iron pipe that he had used as a gun, he went about his duties. The hull must be sounded, the canvas lowered, and everything made shipshape for the blow that he knew was coming.

HE was weather-wise enough to know that the captain of the steamer was right about the coming storm, but Old Gus was stubborn. He had no definite idea of the value of his ship and her scrap iron cargo, but he sensed that there ought to be salvage enough in the job to pay for all the whiskey he could consume for the rest of his life. There was no use throwing that into the lap of the captain of the tramp steamer, just because he had happened on him at an opportune time.

His sounding disturbed him. The hull must be weakening under the constant twist and strain. She was taking water somewhere—not alarmingly, but enough to make a future aboard her one dreary round of pumping.

The captain of the steamer was watching closely and saw the old man dodge for safety as a creaming ridge came over the rail to pour in a white welter over the red iron.

"That offer won't hold much longer. She's blowin' up so fast I can't take you off."

"I gif' you a qvuarter of de salvage money to tow me to Yokohama. At dat you get too much."

"Three-quarters—and not a cent less."

Old Gus disdained to answer and padded on about his duties. The rag of sail came down in a billow and he fought to smother the wind out of it and get it under lashings. By the time he was done the sky was a threatening black with an ominous strip of deep orange far down on the southwestern horizon. The black passed swiftly, bringing more wind, and the orange increased, casting an odd light over everything.

There was a slight commotion on the steamer's bridge and the mate appeared with a small blackboard. Old Gus could read the chalked 1-2 plainly enough, but he shook his head.

The steamer being to leeward, his voice carried better than the skipper's.

"I batten down und go below," he bellowed. "If you vant to tow me for vhat I offer you, giff' me a toot and I come on deck. Odervise, keep avay, or I shoot whoever you send aboart."

A chalked *NO* on the blackboard elicited only a shrug. Gus wheeled and

stalked toward the cabin. The barrel was all but empty. He had been cherishing that last quart for just such an emergency. Let the water rise. Let the seams open. In the best tradition of the sea he would go down with his command.

There was no sound except the howl of the wind, the smash of seas, the creak of dusty plates, and the rattle of loose gear as yards clacked in their pauls. The whiskey was just as good as ever. Its warmth gave him a feeling of vast superiority. He had failed to complete his great saga, but what of that? Few men ever fully attain their dream. It was something to have brought a big ship, loaded with iron, some five thousand miles single-handed, even if she did founder near her destination.

Suddenly the steamer's insistent bray burst upon his happy contemplation of the last half pint. With an assumed air of dignity and indifference Old Gus made the deck. The steamer was wallowing to windward, her stern drifting down toward the *Cariomarcus*.

The bark had fallen off before the wind as soon as her rag of canvas halted her steering. She now lay like a log, rolling awash in the trough of the seas, which under-ran her and surged her high, only to drop her down again. While he clung for dear life to the life line he had rigged for just such emergencies, Old Gus shook his head at the sea. Launching a boat to bring a line was out of the question. If there was to be any towing done, he must haul the hawser aboard himself.

Somebody on the steamer waved him toward the bow. He went slowly, fighting along hand over hand by hauling himself on the life line. Repeatedly he was completely submerged as the seas swept over him, but the whiskey was working and he felt that he had the strength of three or four men now.

He made the bow at last. As the monkey fist flailed at him and fell short, he gripped steel to keep from going overboard. At the second effort the line passed over his head and the knotted end hit the sea beyond him, but he managed to throw an arm around the light heaving line before it washed away.

It was unbelievable that one man could buffet those boarding waves and take in that hawser. The steamer was as near aboard as her master dared to let her drift, but there was still a wide gap between the two. Yet Gus began to heave.

The heavy line, thicker than a man's wrist, came snaking down from the deck of the steamer, to writhe and twist through the seas like a great snake. Four men fed it from the rail to keep from losing too much of it, but there was only one man to take it in—one old man and the best part of a quart of whiskey.

Old Gus braced and heaved, carrying the light line to a stanchion and getting a turn around that to hold the slack. Then his years of battling the sea stood him in good stead. A younger, stronger man would have sagged and heaved his heart out, fighting the drag of the seas in a hurried effort to take the hawser aboard and make it fast. Not so Gus.

Sometimes he stood for minutes, drenched with spray or waist deep in water that surged past him threatening to carry him overboard. Sometimes he heaved in frantically for long seconds, only to brace again as the old ship lifted and the line threatened to part.

At times the men on the steamer thought that he was gone. At times they were sure that he was unable to gain another inch, as the weighty hawser came up through the welter, halted, seemed to shake a tantalizing negative at all his efforts.

Then a great sea lifted the steamer and passed under her, to rear above the *Cariomarcus* in threatening might. The four men, sure that the heave would part the straining line as the two ships were torn apart, labored swiftly. The

hawser snaked down into the angry sea.

OLD GUS saw those snaking curves of slack coming. He ignored the mountain that brought them and reeled in as fast as he could. The end of the heaving line came in sight. His eager hands grabbed the hawser end, wrapped it around the stanchion, held with a grip of death as tons on tons of raging sea beat down upon the bark.

The vessel went completely under in the trough of the wave. The four men on the stern of the steamer knew that she was gone, wondered if they must cut the hawser to keep her from yanking their own stern deep beneath the brine. With intent gaze they watched that wallowing red blotch in the trough of the sea, ready to lash out at the strands when the line started to strain.

It seemed an age that the *Cariomarcus* lay submerged, trying to make up her mind whether to float or sink. Then, slowly, majestically, like a tragic queen, she came slowly up, spewing white water all down her red sides.

Then, at sight of that laboring old figure on her bow, horny old hands taking in more of the hawser to make it fast for the tow, those four let out a spontaneous cheer that carried above the roar of wind and sea.

Old Gus gave them a contemptuous wave of the hand to let them know that the hitch was made and then went dragging aft to take his place at the wheel, just as if the feat he had accomplished were nothing at all. As soon as the steamer had the bark straightened out so that the seas no longer boiled over her decks, he lashed his wheel and rolled forward to the pump. With no thought of the ridiculousness of trying to beat the encroaching sea with his puny efforts, he began that monotonous beat that his back and arms had known for fifty years on a hundred different ships.

With the lashed wheel absorbing but a little of his attention, Old Gus was still taking his turns at the pump as the *Cariomarcus* surged into harbor astern of the laboring steamer. As reporters, sensing a story in this lost ship that had been found, came swarming aboard, they found Old Gus a far from ready recipient of their questions. He merely scratched his thin thatch and stared at them out of rheumy eyes.

"I vant my salvage," was all they got out of him. "I bring her clear across de Pacific und I vant my salvage."

"You'll get it, Gus, old boy," they assured him. "Don't worry about that. The insurance company is going to see to that. You'll get fifty per cent of the valuation of the ship, which they will insist is her inflated insurance value, and fifty per cent of the value of her entire cargo. Besides that the insurance company is giving you a five hundred dollar reward for saving them payment. Now, why did you refuse towage when you were first spoken by that Hawaii-San Francisco liner months ago?"

Old Gus surveyed them for a long minute out of innocent blue eyes.

"I tell you," he grinned slowly. "I never been master of a ship before. I vant to know vhat it's like. Besides, I know she's vort' more in Yokohama und I get more salvage here."

Pencils scurried to get down his exact words. Eager faces studied him. A cartoonist was etching lines on a pad while a photographer shouldered into position.

"Besides," the grin spread clear across the old face now, wrinkling the eyes out of sight, threatening to pitch the drooping moustache in upon the old snags of teeth. "Besides, boys, ve had a barrel of good vhiskey aboart. If I take dat firs' tow to San Francisco I lose some of dat. It take a long trip und a long time, boys, even for Goos to drink a barrel of whiskey."

From the look in their eyes he knew that it was a good thing it was all gone.

He caught the next man, arm and belt . . .

NINE PICKED MEN

(CONCLUSION)

By GEORGES SURDEZ

Begin here

FROM fame on the campus to a penal camp of the Legion—such was the checkered career of "Chesty" Maddock. Formerly a football ace, Maddock had seen his college career blasted by scandal and tragedy, and had fled to the Legion, enlisting under the name of Brandon.

A few weeks later, one of a recruit detachment at Sidi-bel-Abbes, Brandon had learned that there are easier ways to escape from the world than behind the iron fist of the Legion.

From the very first, it seemed, he was signaled out for special attention. Detesch, the room corporal, Kolb, the sergeant at barracks—officer after officer had meted out stern penalties upon him —too often for offences that were insignificant.

After whipping the first in a café—and spending months of punishment duty to make up for it—Brandon was ready to listen to any feasible plan to escape from a life that had become intolerable. And in the person of Matloka, a Spaniard who offered money and safe conduct in return for escort across the Spanish border, Brandon had found a way out.

From Dar-Kaid-Hassan the nine chosen conspirators pulled strings to be placed in the same scouting detail. The rest was easy. Disarming the sergeant

in charge, they struck across the desert —not toward the announced destination, but for Spanish territory and freedom!

Almost at once difficulties arose. Halted by a Spanish patrol, Matloka found that neither he nor his patrol was welcome under the new regime. A parlay ended in open defiance, and a running gun fight ensued, during which Matloka was shot, though not seriously, and several Spaniards were killed.

It was now open war. The road back was barred by the Legion, and Spanish bullets barred their way to the sea and freedom. Nevertheless, they pushed on.

Jardins died the first day, ambushed by vengeful soldiers of Spain. Janreisch, mortally wounded, asked and obtained the mercy of a comrade's bullet. Another died.

And suddenly what had looked like a brave man's gamble had turned into massacre in the desert. Miles to be covered in hostile country, toward an unknown destination. Wanted by the French government—eight years of prison at the minimum. And even more savagely trailed by Spain—for murder!

It looked like a losing gamble, but there was no road back now. Doggedly, the six survivors pushed on.

CHAPTER XI

DESTINY ROAD

SMACK!

The detonation of a rifle six feet away made Brandon roll over, prop himself on all fours. For some seconds he peered about him, dazed, moving his head like a quadruped seeking a scent. Where was he, what time was it? Had he slept ten minutes, ten hours? Was that the light of dawn? The four others were crouched behind the stones; there was a reek of powder in the air. More than one shot had been fired—

Dankowitch looked at him and grinned. "Wondered when you'd come to. We've been at it ten minutes but there seemed no waking you."

Brandon saw that very little time had elapsed. Less than an hour, surely, for it was still afternoon, though the western slopes were dark.

He peered down the slope, and in the distance saw small figures moving. There were foes much nearer, but they hid behind the boulders.

"We weren't across the line, then?" he asked.

Evidently not. Or perhaps they've followed us. What difference does it make?" Dandowitch pressed the trigger. "Not sure, this time. Only an arm and shoulder showing. How many, you ask? Enough—when they first appeared, you'd have sworn there was a battalion of them."

Brandon aimed his rifle at an open space between two huge stones: It would be a temptation for a skirmisher to dodge from one to the other on the way up. Brandon was learning. He no longer felt the least reluctance to shoot. It was self-defense: Those fellows would kill him if they could, execute him if he gave himself up. He did not even wonder at his strange lot—he, an American, seeking to kill some peasant lad from Galicia or Estramadura.

A crouching figure, scuttling—his finger tightened, the gun leaped against his elbow. A flick of the wrist and hand, a fresh cartridge, another pressure. The man remained in sight, sprawled with the arm holding his rifle extended. Brandon saw that arm move, the hand release the rifle's stock, the limb curl up in a long motion, as a piece of paper twists when burned.

"Nice shot," Dankowitch complimented him. He saw everything. "Eh, Konnor, this lad used only two cartridges this time."

"Give him a kiss for me," Konnor called back." Say, those guys have no guts for this sort of work. Haven't had

a chance to shoot, you know that. Ah—" his voice broke off, then he resumed, in astonishment: "Look at that! A white flag!"

"Maybe they want to surrender," Krüger joked.

"We'll see," Dankowitch assured. He rose in full sight, waved his *képi* to show that he accepted the truce.

Down the slope, a lone man stood up, started for the crest. He walked slowly, deliberately. As he came nearer, Brandon knew he was an officer. A fine, alert man, too. He wore a tunic with an open collar, patch-pockets, riding trousers and leather puttees: British style from neck to hips, German style from hips to toes. Among other decorations, Brandon distinguished the French Legion of Honor cross. Probably a veteran of the Riff Campaign.

"Stop where you are, Captain," Dankowitch called. He swung his legs, to sit on the boulder, and carried on the conference from this point of vantage. "You have a proposition to make. What is it?

"You're a cheeky fellow," the delegate retorted, smiling. "There are only six or seven of you, and there are three hundred men about you! However, you fight very well, and we have no lives to waste. Let's come to an understanding."

"Thanks for the compliments, Captain. I admit we are outnumbered, and open to reasonable arguments."

"Splendid. The first proposition is that you should lay down your arms, under guarantee that you will not be executed immediately, but tried before a court-martial."

Dankowitch laughed.

"I beg your pardon, Captain! If I understand you rightly, you are proposing to us twelve to twenty-four hours of life against the lives of—I am modest—ten to fifteen of your soldiers. Naturally, you will comprehend easily that we prefer to play out the game this way. It isn't at all sure that you will capture or kill all of us."

"I cannot promise you freedom and a safe-conduct home," the Spaniard protested. "You have killed several men—"

"Around twenty-two, twenty-three?"

"Too many, in any case. I have another proposition to make: I am able to guarantee you your lives, but not liberty, in case you will surrender at once, and surrender your leader alive. He alone is important to us."

"Refused. It would be too easy to sentence us to prison, and then execute us on another charge after a few days."

"Then what would you suggest?"

"That you permit us to leave and surrender to the French. There is no point of honor involved in allowing us to go. We are not bandits, thieves. We are, so far as you are concerned, counter-revolutionists who have failed, after a loyal, honorable attack. We have been defeated in our major plan, and it's up to you to decide whether each of our lives is worth three of yours."

The captain hesitated. Then he thought that those devils had dropped more than a score, had lost only three or four. He was responsible for his soldiers.

"All right. But I insist upon the surrender of your leader."

"Our former leader," Dankowitch corrected. "As you see, I am in charge. First-Class Legionnaire Dankowitch, *ci-devant* captain in Her Imperial Majesty's Hussars of the Guard. You forget a point: The Legionnaires, like the Swiss, have for motto: 'One for All, All for One'. So, with deep regret—get out of sight and let us use what is left of the day."

"You're a lot of madmen," the captain said.

"That's very true. You have three minutes."

Dankowitch dropped from sight. The officer hesitated, opened his mouth to speak, remembered that with these

chaps three minutes meant three minutes, and started down the slope at a dog-trot, to dodge to cover very quickly.

MATLOKA touched the Russian's elbow.

"Recall him, accept his proposition. If I can save you by surrendering myself, I'll do it."

Dankowitch laughed.

"And they'll apply torture to make you name the people who sent you money, to give them the list of the officers in Morocco connected with the plot. Also, they would double-cross us, and shoot us like rabbits when we got into the open. The officer may be honorable, but his men are crazed. They're not veterans, and take killing personally."

"So we die here, together?"

"Not necessarily, friend. As soon as it is dark, we beat it south. If we are attacked on the way, scatter. I'll give the signal—each man for himself."

"I ought to divide the money I carry," Matloka suggested.

"Not yet," Dankowitch looked at him coldly. "Don't think I did it for that dough you have. I have spent more than that in three months. No, we'll try to get you through so you can make an accounting. As you once told us, it isn't yours."

Brandon saw that for the first time Konnor and Krüger were not as one with their leader. But they probably understood that he would receive any protest with indignation.

"*Alerte!*"

The call, uttered by Krüger, sent them back to the parapet. There were many targets now, for the captain had guessed Dankowitch's intention to escape, and was making a determined attempt to clean up matters before dark. The regulars fired as they came, and from behind, a brace of machine guns raked the hill top. But it is difficult to shoot accurately upward in poor light.

Krüger used up the rifle grenades, which he had carried hopefully for three days. Konnor's automatic ripped, broke off, ripped again.

The big Russian was swearing, because he had to change the magazines himself, and that interrupted his ordinarily perfect rhythm. Matloka, Dankowitch and Brandon ran from one side to another, emptied their magazines, checked a rush here and there.

A Mauser slug, flattened by impact against a stone, tore a gash across Brandon's hand. He lost count of the shots he fired. His palms were seared by the hot metal. Then all was quiet again. The regulars had started to run back.

"They're beating it," Krüger shouted joyously.

His voice resounded in the silence. Brandon looked about him. His eyes instinctively sought Dankowitch. The Russian could not have kept count, this time. Things had been too confused for any one man to follow!

"Dankowitch, Danko!"

They saw him, leaning against the stones, his head and arms hanging on the exposed side. Brandon grasped him by the shoulders, heaved him up. But the body settled heavily between his arms, sank to the ground. Dankowitch, who always survived, was dead. Not all the machine gun slugs had been wasted.

This time there was no pretense at selecting a leader. Only one man was left unscathed, Konnor. Brandon was bleeding from his stiffening hand; Krüger had been hit through the fleshy part of the right arm. Matloka was wounded twice, in the side of the neck and below the right shoulder bone.

"If you think it will be any use," Matloka started," I'll surrender myself—"

"Don't talk foolishly," Konnor scoffed. "They're sore, now! I butchered them, that's what I did! But they're good fellows, they kept coming. If they had a good officer, we'd have been done in long ago. They're game."

He peered through the gathering gloom on the slope. Then he started to laugh. "Eh, Matloka! This is the occasion when Brandon was supposed to come in handy, you told us."

"How?" Brandon asked.

"Well, he said that you were American, had some reputation back home, and that if we got captured, in a jam, about to be shot, the papers in America would start yelling, that the execution might be delayed. He even mailed your name in to his friends. Something that happened some years ago gave him the idea."

"That so, Matloka?" Brandon wondered.

"Yes. Any means of arousing sympathy, anywhere, is legitimate. Until absolute chaos reigns, governments are slow to antagonize other nations. It was a mad idea, like the rest of it."

Night had come.

"They'll be crawling up on us," Krüger said. "We better start down. The east side is too steep to climb, but not too steep to slide down. If they jump us, every man for himself."

They climbed over the stone wall, on the side least likely to be guarded. One by one, they slithered down the pebbly incline, from ledge to ledge. The sounds they made brought detonations. Right and left, short flickers of fire bloomed briefly in the darkness. But the bullets only struck the stone parapet of the deserted platform, as if in a last salute to Dankowitch.

KONNOR led the way. Brandon could barely distinguish his back and head in the obscurity. A strange, fatalistic resignation gripped him. He was so tired that death would have been welcome, that he fought his own instinct to lie down and wait for the end. He had slept perhaps eight hours of the last sixty-five. His last hot meal had been in the native hut, the afternoon of the preceding day. He had carried ten pounds of rifle and bayonet, many pounds of ammunition and equipment, all his waking hours. He had run and he had walked, and the excitement of fighting had worn him further.

He had seen men die. And he had learned that a man's belief in himself was often useless. Matloka! He proved that a belief in immunity was false. Dankowitch! He proved that men were not poured from one clean metal, but mixed cowardice and heroism, poor sportsmanship and sublime resignation. Janreisch! He proved that once a man's feet started to tread the path of misfortune, he could not swerve. Himself!

He was immensely wise, fabulously old. And he wondered whether his hair had turned gray. He would have to look in a mirror. But he would never see a mirror again. Never again. That brought up foolish, mad visions; he imagined himself, dressed as he was, dishevelled, bloody, walking into the ice-cream parlor near his father's garage, with his girl's husband at the drug-counter, and some new soda-jerker, pimply-faced and wise-cracking, serving a lot of young boys and girls in summer clothes. He would sit on a stool, and look at himself in the big mirror, and out of the corner of his eyes, he would see a small, distorted image of himself on each of the porcelain topped flavor-pumps.

"That's Maddock's kid, who got kicked out of college for going on a bat —sure, Chesty. He enlisted in the Foreign Legion, and he got killed out there somewhere."

Because, of course, he, Brandon could not be there in the flesh. It was his ghost that they would see; his ghost would look at himself in the mirror. Then he'd walk out, and see the lights of the garage, the gas pumps, the bluish glow on the cement approach. The cement was gray-blue, and the road surface, on which big cars whizzed madly,

headlights glaring, was dark, dark blue. Dark-blue-black, with green reflections digging down deep below its surface when the light signaled: Go!

He stumbled, crashed through endless space and time to the present. The night, and foliage against the sky, the stars—and Matloka's hand holding on to his cross-belt in back, pulling, pulling, as if to drag him into the grave.

How long had they been walking? Hours, hours—

A big cream colored roadster with New Hampshire license plates. A road white as snow between dark green fields. A small, round lake like a great silver dollar. And in the middle, the crinkled, wrinkled moon. Sixty, sixty-five, narrow bridge, curve, railroad crossing, X, thirty miles . . . Danger!

"Keep going, you fool. We're making it!"

"Watch out, Brandon," Konnor advised. "You're as noisy as an elephant. Pick up your feet, fellow!" Then he resumed: "You're pretty tired, I know. But it's only a short way. We'll get there yet!"

The cheery, optimistic chap! Get—get where?

Why were they driving their bodies, poisoned by fatigue, tortured by thirst—their suffering, bleeding bodies? To get to the border, which had been five kilometers away at four o'clock that afternoon—that mysterious, unmarked frontier they could not locate. Then what?

Arrest, court-martial, eight years in the penitentiary, even if the Spanish Government did not insist on their execution! Could Legionnaires be extradited for crimes committed on foreign soil while in the Legion? That was one for the books, a puzzler for international lawyers, for military courts. Multiple murder while resisting arrest! God! Who knew but they were breaking their hearts to get away, only to be brought back by *gendarmes*, surrendered at a frontier post?

At best, eight years, plus four and some months left to serve on his enlistment, and one year dragged through already. If he ever reached home, he would be nearly forty. He would not know anything: the automobiles would have strange shapes, the radios would have television, and he would have assorted aches and illnesses. A husk of a man, nearly forty—

His shoulders pained, he almost fell on his back.

"Matloka, you fool, go easy."

"My friend, my friend, don't leave me. I'm sick."

Matloka, the proud, the would-be dictator, whom he had admired so ardent-

ly, whom he had called 'sir' and 'captain,' was begging him to be patient. The dirty, yellow rat! Then Brandon remembered that he was wounded, twice wounded, and that he was bleeding, probably, despite the first-aid bandages. The big youngster hung back, clasped Matloka about the waist with his free arm. The other was quivering, shaking. Fever, of course!

By contrast, Brandon was a giant in strength and health.

"Keep going, we're making it," he whispered.

"Don't leave me here, in the dark—"

"I tell you we're making it." Brandon grew urgent. "Keep going. I swear I won't quit you."

Krüger, bringing up the rear, bumped into them. There was a clatter of metal; then the German swore aloud: "Warn when you halt, you fools!"

"Shut up, there!" Konnor invited.

The same fumbling progress, jerky halts. They must be through on the right side of the frontier. Where they going to walk straight down to Taza? Five kilometers at four o'clock! How would they know when they were safe?

KONNOR stopped again. They had reached the end of a long stretch of bushes and trees, and a long bare slope was before them. Six, seven hundred yards to cover in the open. And the stars gave enough light to discern boulders, masses of thick, briar-like grasses. They decided to skirt the edge of the bushes, to cross the nude hill at its narrowest part. That was what consumed time and miles, that excessive caution.

They halted for a final conference.

"The hell with it," Krüger said. "I bet there isn't a garlic-chewer within twenty kilometers. It would take ten thousand men to guard these hills at night completely."

"We've got to risk it, anyway," Konnor admitted. "Say we cross this open place, go a little ways down the slope and bunk for the night?"

"All right—"

They walked across with growing confidence as they neared the dark masses of bushes. Matloka had recovered, and walked without assistance. The thought of rest, of laying down, had acted like a camphorated injection.

A dull, booming detonation, not very near.

"Beat it, beat it—" Konnor cried. "Each man—"

He did not finish, his breath cut off by his sudden effort. Krüger was after him with amazing speed. Brandon hauled Matloka by the elbow, jerking him four feet at a time. But he did not know from what he was running—

Then all was drenched in livid, bluish light, the glare of a rocket. That was what the others had feared. And with the light came detonations, that odious metallic whispering of the air, a summons that seemed to shrill hypocritically: *"Wheeere are youououou—hou?"*

Brandon flung Matloka headlong, stretched out himself. And the storm of lead passed, the detonations ended abruptly, with the light. Darkness returned with an almost physical impact, jabbing into Brandon's pupils, penetrating his brain, flooding his whole being with its palpable black stuff. It was night inside and out.

He grasped Matloka by the belt, hoisted him toward the bushes. Branches and spine crackled against his body, whipped his face, tore painfully at his wounded hand. Another deep booming sound, muffled—and the blue light spilled again, searing his eyes, turning the grass blades, the small leaves, into shining silver. But he gloated, because he knew that though he saw the light, he himself was invisible, on his belly, under the leafage. An automatic rifle stuttered a perfunctory warning. The rocket went out, fell in a dying glow across the sky. Minutes passed before

the sound of voices came to Brandon's ears. Excited, sonorous Spanish.

This must have proved too strong a temptation for Konnor. The Legionnaire recognized his particular rhythm, could have claimed to know the "voice" of the French automatic rifle. Somewhere, alone in the darkness, the Russian was laughing and boasting, to himself—as he had no listeners now. What was it Dankowitch had said, Danko who spoke so easily? Because I'm a Russian, because I'm a man, because I'm a Legionnaire! That was why Konnor fired!

CHAPTER XII

ATTACK!

NIGHT, silence.

Had he been alone, Brandon might have cradled his head in his arms and slept. But he had promised Matloka to care for him, and Matloka was giving out. The American aroused him by prodding his flanks with his fist, assisted him to his feet. There was no question of trying to locate his comrades.

"Come on, come on—hold on to my belt—"

He would not lose his way, for the moon was rising. He would keep it on his left until fatigue forced him to drop. That would not be long enough to matter. And the border must be very close; probably the regulars who had attacked them a few minutes ago had gone to prepare their ambush as far south as they could.

Matloka was moaning in a sing-song, droning voice, as if he found relief in the repeated tones. It was annoying, but very soft, and would not carry very far. Matloka and his belt full of gold, full of Spanish gold, Spanish bullion, Spanish galleon, galleons of gold, galleons of gas—can't let myself go—Matloka and Brandon, who were making it—we'll make it—ten yards to go—a whole country to cross—

"In the wilds of this wild countr—ee!"

That was from some college song. And that was all he could remember, those seven words, for his memory before and beyond was an empty pit. He could remember that snatch of a tune, and those seven words.

That was crazy; he knew the whole song. His mind was slipping. He could see Estelle at the piano, and himself turning the pages of the music, and he could almost read the title. Never quite!

Estelle—he had not thought of her for eleven years. One of the kids . . . she had gone out west with her family because a brother had caught consumption. Did you catch or did it grow on you? You got the bugs, the bugs, the bugs—

The moonlight seeped down the slopes, between the trees, and threw shadows like the grilled door of a cell. And something was moving ahead of him, he knew. He knew and did not care.

There were four of them, rather short young men, but muscular and broad. They had heard him humming, and they had followed his uncertain steps. By killing him, they would have immediate satisfaction, vengeance. But if he chanced to be the man sought, and they turned him in alive, there was a reward of one hundred pesetas, and promotion for the corporal. And in their greed, they made their mistake. They ascertained that the fellow in the rear was ready to drop, the man dragging him was not much better off.

They laid down their bayonetted rifles and waited. When one was angry and excited, one smashed a gun butt down too hard, and killed one hundred pesetas. These fools must be worn out; they had been as far north as Tabrettin that morning, after coming from God alone knew where!

Brandon saw them coming, and did not react at once. He was not sure that they were real, thought they might be

only in his mind. Two of them grasped him, one on each side, while a third had hold of his slung rifle. The fourth tackled Matloka, who groaned and fell headlong. In a flash, Brandon was disarmed, the bayonet ripped from its scabbard and thrown into the bushes.

They did not call for others—a hundred pesetas, split four ways, was small enough. And they could have led Brandon away, like an ox, if they had only known. But these men had been with the sections ordered ly the hill, and they had been frightened. So the corporal, who knew that a punch did not kill, offered himself the satisfaction. He struck hard.

By a queer phenomenon, Brandon, who might have been dazed by the blow under normal conditions, was jarred from his apathy. It was as if he had awakened suddenly from a deep sleep. And he was startled to find his arms weighed down by men. Another blow cut his lips.

Small guys, he thought—little guys. Great strength seemed to pour into his limbs from the ground itself. His rage filled him like compressed gas, exploded suddenly. Thus it had been when his grandfather had grown angry, had been seized by his formidable, mystic fury. He was not afraid, he was not desperate. He was indignant. He tore his wrists free, and his long arms reached out. One gathered the corporal close, the other bent, and a macelike, mangled fist hammered the man's head.

He dropped him, caught the next man, arm and belt, swung him high and tossed him aside. He bore down on the third, who had picked up a big stone, and trampled him like a charging pachyderm. He felt eight feet tall, and heavy as a tank. He was full of scorn for the world, for men. He was the prey of a sublime, awesome drunkenness.

He laughed, because there was one left scurrying around, like a bug, like a cockroach, and his big legs distended like springs. He hit him with all his weight, above the knees, below the hips, fell on him with both knees. The man gasped and did not move again.

Brandon rose. Only one opponent was moving. Something gleamed in his hand, a blade. He rushed him recklessly. The fellow turned tail and ran. The Legionnaire looked around, kicked once or twice at one of the fallen soldiers. Then his rage vanished as rapidly as it had come, his weariness reasserted itself.

He picked up his rifle, lifted Matloka. There was no longer any sense of danger. All he knew was that he should keep on walking, walking, no matter where, until he dropped.

WHEN he awoke, the sun was high already.

His first sensation was thirst. And he discovered that he had slept beside a stream. Probably he had stopped there to drink, and after drinking had fallen asleep. He felt stiff; his movements awoke acute throbbings all over his body, but he knew he was not seriously injured. Matloka was nearby, eyes closed, his bristly chin sagging on his chest. There was a tin cup at his side, partially filled with water, so Brandon knew that he must have brought him drink.

His head was clear.

But he knew he had been almost delirious just before he had lost track of things. He grinned as he thought of one of his visions: Fighting Spanish soldiers in a moonlight glade, going from one to another, beating them into the ground! That had been a pip! It showed something or other about his inner makeup, a psychologist could tell him. Delusions of immense strength, frustrated aspiration to dominate others.

And he dismissed that memory, never thinking it was real.

He awoke Matloka, who stared at him with bewildered eyes. The man's

skin was burning to the touch. But he was conscious, aware of the situation. "Do you know where we are?"

"Haven't the least idea," Brandon admitted. "But as long as we keep walking in the direction of the sun, we're not heading north."

"Where are the others? We weren't alone—"

"No. Konnor and Krüger were with us. But we got shot at and they ducked. As I was nearest to you, I took charge. Come on, try to get up. Easy—how do you feel?"

"All right—"

"Grab hold of my cross-belt if you need to." Brandon verified the loading of his rifle. And he started forth. The water he had drunk swished in his empty stomach, but did not appease his hunger.

His visions now were more healthy, but almost as torturing. Enormous steaks flanked by piles of golden fried potatoes, great yellow eggs floating in bacon grease, hot dogs, chicken pié, all that he had ever eaten, came to mind. Come what might, he would try to get food at the nearest native settlement.

He was striding along, forcing his thoughts away from danger of capture, a useless process as he could do little now to avoid it, when he heard his name called.

"Brandon!"

His glance scanned the hills, and he saw Legionnaires trotting down a slope, in single file. A patrol. He remembered his situation, halted, laid his rifle on the ground and held up both hands.

"I surrender," he called out.

"Put down your paws, you fool," the sergeant shouted back. "We're not afraid of you!"

The Legionnaires surrounded Brandon. There were Dobynski, Eullard, old Lanburger. He knew all of them. They did not seem angry with him, shook his hand.

"Where did you get to, anyway? Krüger and Konnor bumped into a cavalry patrol at four-thirty this morning, and asked to be turned over to the Legion. They told the Lieutenant all about that trip of yours, and said you and Matloka had escaped, too. We've been looking for you all day."

"Just woke up an hour ago," Brandon replied. "Got anything to eat?"

He was given a tin of beef, half a loaf of bread and a canteen full of wine. The sergeant had fired two shots in the air, the signal agreed upon to report that the last two deserters had been found. The lieutenant was somewhere near, with two combat groups. They watched him eat, and plied him with questions.

"Konnor claims he got at least ten—is it true that Krüger wiped out a gang of them with grenades? Say, on the level, did a Spanish captain offer you dough and a safe-conduct out of Morocco if you gave up Matloka, and Dankowitch told him to go to hell?"

Two men, who were attending to Matloka's wounds, unrolling bandages and smashing iodin bulbs, shouted excitedly: "It's true. eh, look—he's got a belt full of gold under his shirt! I'll never call any guy a liar any more until I'm sure!"

Brandon answered questions with his mouth full. And the epic of the venture dawned on him for the first time. His comrades did not look on him as a deserter only, he realized, but as a hero. He nodded when asked if it was true that they had held off a full battalion with two small cannon. And before he could correct the impression given by the nod, that amazing feat was another brick in the legend. He was as important now as a veteran with medals and three chevrons.

Brandon had hardly shoved away the empty tin plate, rinsed his palate with a mouthful of red wine, when a cigarette was placed between his lips, while Corporal Eullard struck a match.

"Is it true that Janreisch asked some-

one to shoot him, and knelt and prayed while waiting?"

"Sure."

"Who shot him?"

"One of us. I don't remember. There was nothing else we could do, you understand. We'd just seen two of our guys chopped to bits, and he said he couldn't shoot himself because he'd go to hell—"

Brandon spoke confidently. He looked like a man who had had a strenuous time, with his grimy, peeling face, his battered nose and mouth, the four day's growth of beard flecked with dried blood.

When Lieutenant Porhoet arrived, he stood to attention. The officer casually offered his hand. "Well, sore-head, glad to be with us again?"

"You bet, *mon lieutenant.*"

"Didn't I tell you to be careful where you picked your friends? I always thought that the fellow over there wasn't exactly harmless, even before we were tipped off to watch him a bit. What's all this about your fighting off a battalion?"

Brandon again narrated his adventures, almost truthfully.

THREE days later, Sergeant Carral opened the door of Brandon's cell, hooked a thumb over his shoulder. "Eh, go and equip yourself at the barracks and report to the lieutenant at his quarters."

"Not at the office?"

"Listen, you should understand French by now, stupid! I said at his quarters. In his room, where he sleeps."

"Am I released from prison?" Brandon wondered.

"I don't know! Get going."

Brandon's heart was thumping against his ribs. He had been locked up on his return to the post, but had not heard a word of the charges against him. A sentry had told him that Porhoet had gone to Taza to see the major, who had seen the colonel, and so on.

In the barracks, he saw Konnor, changing from prison garb into white drill.

Matloka and Krüger, by this time, were in the hospital at Meknes. Brandon changed, and the two helped each other to roll within the blue sashes.

"What do you think they'll do with us?" Brandon asked.

"I don't know. Doesn't look bad. When Krüger and I got back, and he heard our story, the lieutenant said he'd try to get us out of this jam as easy as possible. If he got it down to disciplinary council, it won't be more than six months. We put up a good fight, and that always counts, in any army in the world. If we had turned in our guns and let the cops bring us back, Porhoet would have kicked our pants and sent us down the line for court-martial."

"But we deserted, no getting away from that," Brandon insisted.

"You're going to cry because they let you off? Come on and let's hear what he has to say."

They crossed the wide yard side by side, knocked on Porhoet's door.

"Come in and shut the door behind you!"

They obeyed, came to attention after saluting, four paces from the table behind which sat their chief. The small apartment was as simple as he was: A cot, a washstand, a pine cupboard, two tin trunks. Nothing on the white-washed walls, save one postal card fastened with a thumb-tack: A photograph of the war-time flag with its guard of honor.

Porhoet looked them over, nodded.

"Well turned out," he approved. They accepted the compliment without smiling. There was nothing personal in it—a military appreciation, that was all.

The lieutenant rose, stuffed one hand in his pocket, walked the width of the room, pivoted at the wall, walked to the

other side. He kept this up for several seconds in silence, then started to speak.

"You fellows put a nasty job on my hands. I had to go on my knees, practically, to save you from the penitentiary. I said you didn't belong in jail, that you had deserted because you were not occupied, because you were bored, that if they gave you something to do, put you somewhere else than in a garrison dump, you would be good soldiers. They had to admit that, at battalion headquarters: Our Intelligence Service has reports to confirm your statements.

"You're lucky, twice lucky. Both governments wish to keep the affair from being known. And the Spaniards are as much in the wrong as we are. Some of the patrols they sent after you came over on our side. They were disarmed and held, some of them after firing a couple of shots. They explained later that they mistook our irregulars for hostile tribesmen. We released them after an agreement that we would forget if they forgot. Neither side can have it all over the papers that there was border warfare for thirty-six hours.

"So my superiors, instructed by the government, agreed that to court-martial you would bring out too many forbidden incidents in the testimony. Some newspaper might get hold of the facts. That would lead the militant factions in both countries to demand apologies, reparations. The Spanish government is not so securely established as to wish complications with another power. It has its own problems to consider.

"On the other hand, with the campaign waged against the Legion, France does not want to give out your fine exploits. Doesn't want to explain why, when Matloka had been spotted by our agents, no one had the energy and foresight to have him arrested.

"But they wanted to give you at least a couple of years, on minor charges. You are both grown men, not children, and you both know that would be absolutely fair. But I am soft hearted. I know how a man gets going in a given direction and can't stop. I yelled as loud as I could, brought forth the fact that any one of the survivors, if tried, would talk. They understood that. And they ask me to give them a way out, a legal escape from prosecuting you.

"That was hard to find. I did, though. I said that desertion was not an accomplished fact until a man had been away from his formation a full six days, or had attempted to enter a foreign country. I pointed out that you had left on a Monday, had vanished for awhile, and had reappeared to surrender of your own free will to one of our patrol Thursday afternoon on Moroccan Protectorate soil. Unless the authorities cared to prove themselves that you had entered the Riff, which was precisely what they were trying to avoid doing, all you were guilty of was illegal absence.

"So we compromised on ninety days' prison, thirty of them solitary. That was easy enough, eh?"

"Yes Lieutenant," they agreed.

"I made them another proposition which they accepted. Even that punishment shall be lifted if you volunteer for a march battalion which is to campaign through the Anti-Atlas and into the Mauritanian Sahara. Konnor knows what the proposition is. For your benefit Brandon, such a battalion goes out for months, the time needed—a year, eighteen months, two years—fighting hard, working hard between fights. The bargain is not as attractive as it sounds. You may wish yourself in a comfortable, safe prison more than once."

"I'll volunteer, Lieutenant," Konnor snapped.

"I'll go, Lieutenant," Brandon declared.

"You will find Krüger there also. I shall keep my eye on the three of you, for I have obtained an assignment to command one of the companies."

Brandon noticed that Porhoet saw

nothing humorous in his considering a favor for himself what he suggested as their method of atonement.

"What about Legionnaire Matloka, Lieutenant? Will he be there?"

"No. His kind make more trouble than they are worth. There are important people involved with him, and we shall all be happy to have him leave and get himself hanged elsewhere. The doctors have decided that his wounds will incapacitate him from further service and will give him his discharge. I hope you realize that you are lucky, all of you—"

"We thank you, Lieutenant."

"Don't thank me," Porhoet shrugged. "Circumstances worked for you in the end. You went beyond possible limits, committed too many crimes for you to be adequately punished. Just as a small boy who, having been spanked for breaking a window pane, sets fire to the house. His fault is hidden because of its horrible nature, and also because of complications over the insurance. You may go."

The two Legionnaires saluted, pivoted. Konnor went out.

"Brandon! Just a moment—" Porhoet himself closed the door. "You have all the instincts of a real Legionnaire. You brought a wounded comrade in, not because you liked him, but, whether you know it or not, because he wore our uniform. You have had your fling at deserting, and you've been glad to return. Most Legionnaires try to desert at least once. I did, in my time."

"You, Lieutenant!"

"Me! So I know that once you have returned to the Legion as to your home, you have it in your blood. You signed for five years; you have over four left. I predict now that if you live through the next couple of years, you will be a sergeant. Even if you decide to leave when your enlistment expires—you will not believe it now, but it is true—your years with us will stand out in your entire life."

Brandon was at attention. His shoulders squared when he thought of what he had done, what he had shared. He was not the same man who had enlisted, not the same who had gone to prison for six months, not the same who had deserted with Matloka, a week ago to the day. His seventy-two hours of "illegal absence" had tempered him. He understood a multitude of things that Porhoet implied but which no one could put into words.

"I know that already, Lieutenant."

His eyes met those of his chief squarely. He saluted and left, without another word.

THE END

DANGEROUS DAYS—ROMANTIC ADVENTURES
in a
GLAMOROUS NEW CLOAK-AND-SWORD CARAVAN

THE SON OF A KING
by Henry La Cossitt
Romance follows in the wake of Cortez the Conqueror in this gripping saga of Old Mexico.

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On the Stands July 2nd

He lowered his head and charged.

CALL OFF THE WILD

By Paul Annixter

IT WAS returning to camp along the tote-road from the deep woods that O'Toole was first aware of the scent. It was perhaps less a scent than a feel, the feel of freedom, intangible but electrifying, that came from far away in the October woods.

For two weeks the old mule had vaguely felt and heard this call in the ambient autumn air, but he had not actually smelled it until now. The drumming of cock-partridge on hidden logs, the whistling passage of ducks and wild geese overhead, and now and then the far and melancholy call of a moose, were all a part of it. The fierce fever of the mating time for all the hooved and antlered tribes was at its height, a rousing tocsin in the air, carrying with it the sense of grim combats taking place afar in the forest.

What effect could such things have on a dull, slab-sided old work drudge like O'Toole, you ask? Plenty. Though he possessed no antlers, O'Toole had redoubtable teeth, and hoofs—quite possibly the largest hoofs for his size on the American continent, shod with iron and literally itching to carry him away into parts unknown.

Except that he was harnessed to a heavy load of timber which even his murderous heels could not topple or scatter, O'Toole would have done something about the call then and there. Instead, he waited until he reached camp. So great was his guile that he let himself be unhitched from the sledge and drank his fill of needed water before he acted. Then his fiddle face came round and he favored his driver, one Indian Andy, with a grin, the leery, toothy sort of grin that only a mule or a jackass can produce, the while his long ears laid back on his skull, sign-warning to all within range of his heels of an imminent goal-kick to kingdom come.

The Indian, forewarned by experience and possibly by that sixth sense which seems the especial gift of the aborigine, leapt back in time, whereupon O'Toole turned his attention upon one

of the other work animals, a big gelding that had just come up for water. His hind-quarters slewed around and his iron-shod hoofs drummed hollowly on the ribs of the unsuspecting drinker. In a moment the two beasts were whistling, bawling and prancing about the clearing, following one another up in reverse gear after the terrible fighting tactics of horses and mules, reaching to strike serpentlike with their white and grinning teeth.

Beginning as it does, somewhere forward near the shoulders, the kick of a healthy mule is heavy ordnance compared to that of any horse, and O'Toole had started to cut his opponent to ribbons when half a dozen men burst out of the nearby bunkhouse, including Johnny Marteau, the boss teamster, who loosed a spate of backwoods language, sizzling and French-fried, on the crisp October air. Perceiving the utter futility of words, Chuck McArthur, the camp foreman, seized a shovel and brought it down with such force on the back of O'Toole that the handle broke off short.

No further instigation was needed to start the old mule on a bender away from that place. For a week or more O'Toole had been harboring ideas of his own concerning lumber camps and the labor problem in general, which the call of the wild had brought to a head. And let it be said that once a decision had entered his one-way brain, only death or disaster could derail his train of thought. For O'Toole was no ordinary mule; he was, in the words of Chuck McArthur, "a cross between a tarantula and an ingrown toe-nail."

With a final flirt of his heels, the old bruiser turned and cut for the nearby woods at a lumbering gallop.

Chuck McArthur roared at the men to fetch a rifle. Many a time, by his own word, the foreman had been on the point of tunneling O'Toole's jug head with a bullet for his perfidious ways, and now the time had come. Before the rifle could be brought, however, O'Toole, as if sensing his danger, slipped into high and with a final burst of speed vanished in a dense thicket of spruce at a mean rate of about thirty-five miles an hour.

The soft voice of Johnny Marteau broke in on the foreman's sulphurous outburst.

"What's the use of making crow-bait of the old devil?" he reasoned. "Only make the camp half a day's work to bury him. Let the woods take care of him—the wolves, the cougars, the grizzly bears. They'll fix him plenty—"

"The old son of a gun would choke any grizzly that tried to eat him," snorted Chuck McArthur.

"Maybe so. Anyhow the woods will teach him a thing or two. He can't live on pine needles. He'll come back in time, starved and beaten, with no more kick left in him than an empty hooch bottle."

"You think so, eh?" said Chuck McArthur. "You Canucks don't know mules—anyhow, not real Missouri mules. Now and again you can tame one of 'em, but when you get one like O'Toole, he ain't worth hell-room in the hot place."

"You like to lay little bet that a week in the woods won't tame him?"

"You're on," said Chuck McArthur. "I'll bet you my trip to Vancouver next month against fifty dollars, that nothing in these woods or out of 'em will ever tame O'Toole."

EVER since the coming of O'Toole in mid-summer there had been trouble of one sort or another in camp. He had been one of a team of powerful work animals which Chuck McArthur had had sent up from the south. Though the mules were aliens to the north, the foreman's idea had been a good one. Thirteen hands high, sure-footed, with muscles like twisted cables from years of hard labor, no weight of timber could

long resist their pull. The mules had proven themselves tireless as donkey-engines, quite equal to working all day and half the night if necessity arose, at brutish toil such as would quickly break down a horse.

Rock, the team-mate, was a fairly docile animal as mules go; O'Toole alone had caused all the trouble. There had been the malicious chewing up and breaking of harness, for instance, the splintering of the new stalls and the laming and brutalizing of several horses under the barrage of the old mule's battering feet. O'Toole had been named by Chuck McArthur after a pugnacious Irish lumberjack who a few years before had set himself up as the camp bully. The mule in truth seemed possessed of the devil, for on top of his other iniquities he was ever waiting for a chance to batter his driver into deep bylo with his treacherous heels, as all the teamsters had found out.

As may be gathered, the old mule was a ripe candidate at this time for death or deflation, and he had come to the perfect locale to be shown a thing or two, for the north woods have wrought miracles on many a case-hardened character before now. In less than half an hour after his plunge into the unsurveyed, the wilderness had begun taking the old tough in hand.

On and on into the green silence of the bush he had wandered, stopping to crop bunches of grass and young leaves as he went, lingering nowhere long, however, for in him was an insistent urge to put distance between him and the scene of his recent endeavors.

He had not the remotest idea of whither he was heading or of what he expected to find. He was simply being driven forward by that urge that had awakened in his blood in the past two weeks—an urge to muscle-in on the secret doings of the wild which he felt all about him, and see what came of it. He had progressed about a mile and a half in this wise, when Fate presented him with his first contact.

He had paused in an aspen-grown hollow to ruminate for a space when the crackle of twigs on the slope above made him turn. Half a dozen sleek, long-legged animals somewhat taller than himself came stalking over the ridge—a bull elk squiring five cows, moving leisurely toward the sheltered mountain slopes to the west before the coming of the first snows. O'Toole had never seen an elk before, but he knew at once there was some connection between these creatures and the rousing call he had felt so long. He plunged forward eagerly to meet them, his big ears wig-wagging his pleasure and curiosity.

The antlered bull, however, had no such chummy ideas. He came stamping forward to intercept the stranger, eyes blazing in a decidedly unfriendly manner, and emitting loud whooshing blasts from his nostrils. O'Toole's ears laid back and his nostrils flared in answer.

Five yards away the bull elk did a strange thing. Thrusting his forefeet into the soil, he came to an abrupt halt, white-eyed with terror. Mixed with the weird aroma of mule the scent of man had come to his nostrils. At any other time of year save this season of reckless courage and unreasoning belligerence the elk would have turned and fled. As it was, a jealous wrath made him hold his ground until O'Toole came up. Perhaps the old mule construed this as faint-heartedness on the part of the bull. Coming to a halt in front of the harem-leader, he thrust out his Roman nose and took stock of him, horns, head, hoof and tail, then deliberately snorted in the other's face.

That was too much for the overheated temper of the elk. The atmosphere took on a sudden menace. With no warning beyond a windy ruckle, the bull lowered his head until his antlers pointed straight ahead, and charged.

THE shock almost knocked O'Toole from his feet. With a startled bray, he rallied in in a manner that took his opponent utterly by storm. His lips drew back from his big teeth, he swapped ends with a snap and cut loose with a terrific broadside of both rear hoofs, weighted by six pounds of iron shoes. Those hoofs rattled on the bull's ribs like bricks dropped on a board sidewalk. In all the wild there is no creature that ever resorts to rear-hoof fighting tactics, and the sheer surprise of the thing laid the elk open to a second onslaught that flung him against a tree with a rib-cracking jolt.

Seasoned fighter that he was, he recovered swiftly and began to circle his strange opponent, waiting his chance. He was fighting, as he thought, for the preservation of his hard-won seraglio; what O'Toole was fighting for he had no idea, but he was getting a great kick out of it in two senses of the word.

Abruptly the elk came in, rearing and striking downward with keen-edged forehoofs. The blows rocked O'Toole on his feet, but he took them stoically, that he might get in the jaw hold for which he was famous—his long head with ears laid back, thrust and struck like the head of a serpent, black lips furled in a white-toothed grin.

The old mule had been sired by a fierce Spanish jack with a grim reputation as a mouth-fighter, and O'Toole was a chip off the old block. His jaws closed over the elk's entire shoulder, a spread which no other living grass-eater could have compassed, and instead of letting go he hung on, until the elk, whistling and bawling in agony, literally tore himself loose.

Utterly bewildered and not a little demoralized by the terrible fighting tactics of the foe, the forest lord began to prance and circle warily, waiting another chance to charge with lowered antlers. Each time he lowered his head, however, he thought better of it, for O'Toole was bringing the battle to him now, following up his maneuvers, and lashing out all the while with savage heels. One shod hoof lifted a triangular flap of hide and flesh from the bull's sleek flank.

Coughing in a blind fury of rage and pain, his tawny coat dripping red, the elk smashed in with all his weight behind lowered antlers. O'Toole took the full impact in the chest, endeavoring to close crocodile jaws on his opponent's throat. They closed instead on the bull's ear and ground it to a bleeding rag, whereupon, with an elemental bellow of pain and sheer consternation, the elk bull turned and fled the field of battle, utterly chastened and horribly chastized, driving his harem before him.

O'Toole, riding the wave of his vantage and more set up with himself than he had been in his life, gave chase for a short distance; then, stretching forth his neck and laying back his ears, he closed his eyes soulfully and uttered a long bray of victory.

THE OLD mule had never dreamed what was in him until this afternoon. For twenty-five years he had lived and toiled and never sown a single wild oat. What he would have done about it had he actually slain his opponent he had not the slightest idea, but he knew that already something had turned over suddenly in his brain.

His bray was a highly creditable one, a blast of appalling discord, loud at first and diminishing as the sound went forth across the forested hills, ending in an emotional *"hic"* of inebriaty. Undoubtedly it was the weirdest cry those hills had known since the mighty tree-browsers of the Pleistocene fed along the slopes, but O'Toole was so pleased with the effect that he tried it again.

He would have foregone the gesture, however, could he have known the re-

sult on the populous but unseen world of the underwoods. A deer family, crossing a ridge a few hundred yards away, turned and melted swiftly into the scenery. A tuft-eared lynx, stalking grouse in the blue spruce glooms, turned pale, horrified eyes in the direction of the sound and did a devil's exit, simply dissolving like a puff of gray smoke, almost colliding with a red fox who had been lying in wait for the same birds. But one there was in those same spruce shadows that did not flit away; instead he came stealing after O'Toole as softly as the shadows of dusk that were now stealing through the woods.

O'Toole had gone in search of water and had found it quickly, in spite of his inexperience and the descending darkness—a little spring-fed stream whispering its way through alders and willows. A good place to spend the night, thought O'Toole as he drank. It was getting rapidly colder as darkness fell and the wanderer was hungry as well as thirsty, and lonely, too, though as yet he did not realize it. He was standing with head hanging, jaw foolishly a-sag in what passed with him for sleep, when a faint, rank, musty smell came wafting to his nostrils, made extra keen by their dipping in the stream.

He did not know that taint, but some blood memory within him, deep buried perhaps as the saber-tooth tiger, knew it well. It got him quickly to his feet, to stand shifting this way and that, searching the surrounding shadows with rolling eyes.

The smell grew ranker, and presently in the blue shadows the old mule became aware of eyes, two in number, pale and rimmed with fire and fixed upon him with the cold ferocity of several fiends. Behind the eyes a low serpent-like form hugged the ground. A spearpoint of foreboding pierced O'Toole; his muscles stiffened and the air ruckled spasmodically through his flaring nostrils. Followed an interminable period of waiting, in which the pale watching eyes went out three separate times and came on again at a different vantage.

Something about this phenomena was rather effectively dulling the call of the wild in O'Toole's blood. Sudden homesickness gripped him, a yearning for his own warm stall, his team-mate Rock, even for his oft-hated master, Chuck McArthur. He was not a timid soul, but he wanted very much to be out of that place. Instinct, however, warned against turning his back upon those night-lit eyes. He was staring stupidly at the spot where the eyes had last disappeared when the thing happened.

He felt rather than saw a shadow detach itself from a low branch and launch straight toward him. His galvanic start forward quite possibly saved him from a broken neck. As it was, four sets of red hot claws found purchase in his back and withers, as the big male cougar landed upon him with a fiendish squall.

O'Toole leapt forward with a bawl of pain. A hot, foul breath was in his nostrils as his devilish rider reached far forward for a throat hold. It was the cougar's custom to kill by dislocation. His mailed paw, that had felled many a deer and horse with a single blow, hooked beneath O'Toole's neck and wrenched. The neck of a draft mule, however, is almost as unyielding as so much concrete. The claws of the killer ripped through flesh and hide, and O'Toole, with a bawl of pain and protest, plunged madly up into the pit-black shadows of a spruce-fir grove, bucking at every other leap. Blind chance led him beneath a low branch. Came a thud, the excruciating torment of claws ripping along his shoulders, and the deathly weight on his back was gone.

But only for a moment. The cougar, like all his kind, had a weakness for horseflesh, and as he had never seen a mule, there was no doubt in his mind but that O'Toole was a strayed horse,

albeit an extra tough and strong-smelling specimen. His yellow fangs parted in a grin of lust and he was in again from the side, but O'Toole, in a frenzy of fear, was lashing out all around him with his heels. Blind instinct was again with him and he landed, just once, a sledge-hammer blow that drummed suddenly on the killer's chest.

Bewildered and battered, with two of his ribs broken, the cougar nevertheless sprang again from haunches of coiled steel. He had killed too many horses in his time to be balked by this heavy duty model of the species. But just as his head sank upon his big forepaws, O'Toole voiced his pain and fright to his maker and the forest night in general in a mighty elemental bray. It was a call for help, an appeal for mercy, an unearthly and stupendous sound there at close quarters in the treble-welted blackness of the pine wood. Of all the things a cat abhors, sudden nerve-wracking sounds rank first. And of all the noises of heaven or earth, the bray of a healthy mule is the most appalling.

The discordant crash of sound was too much for the cougar's high-tension nervous system. Before the bray was half finished, the spruce shadows had swallowed up the killer and the sound of his going.

THE REST of that night O'Toole saw nothing whatever of the wild denizens of those parts, but for all that he did not put in his time sleeping. The frost prevented that, for one thing. And, although the old reprobate was inclined to be set up over the fact that the cougar had been put to flight, he had no intention of being caught off his guard again. Through most of the dark hours, therefore, he stood in a clearing in the forest from which he could watch the surrounding trees, hungry and shivering, his dull nostrils twitching as he attempted to winnow the breeze for messages of menace. But the chill, aromatic odors of the deep forest were all an unknown book to him.

He was getting really homesick now, and his faith in freedom had all but vanished. Furthermore, he was lost, for he had not even good animal instincts to guide him in this new world. A life in man's keeping had completely robbed him of these. Like many another, he was realizing the painful difference that exists between actuality and a dream. For a couple of forkfuls of second rate hay he would gladly have accepted the harness of servitude for the rest of his life.

His spirits rose somewhat as the sky began to lighten faintly. Up along a fir-clad slope he wandered, his shod feet leaving a path in the frost that rimed the deer-grass, which he paused at intervals to sample skeptically. A night of trepidation, plus his stiffening wounds, had whittled him down to a pint-size sketch of his yesterday's self. For the first time in his life something like meekness and contrition were written in his mien and movements. But Fate was not yet through with him.

As he plodded along in the direction he believed might lead him home, the snicker of red squirrels and the raucous mockery of gray Canada jays mocked the would-be renegade in his disillusionment. And then through the lifting mists of night he heard once more the melancholy plaint of a moose in the distance. It was this call that had originally roused the wanderlust in the old mule's blood. Some timbre in it, rough and uncouth, that was not unlike his own discordant voice. Impulsively he halted and listened. Battered and miserable as he was, he knew an overwhelming desire to see the maker of that intriguing plaint.

As quietly as possible he advanced through the spruce jungles, and presently sighted a gaunt, long-legged animal of the same neutral color as himself

limned against the rising sun. The creature had the same long donkey-like ears as O'Toole, the same Roman curve of nose, and a similar mule-like head shaped not unlike an old shoe. None of these points, it appeared, were lost on the runaway.

As he came up, the other creature seemed likewise struck by some familiarity in O'Toole's cut and carriage; at any rate, it stood there gazing at him with a mild curiosity. Impulsively O'Toole raised his head, then his voice, but checked himself in mid-bray as he thought once more of the cougar. But other ears had heard his broken cry and the distinctly masculine note it carried.

O'Toole wheeled at sound of a crackling in the brush some fifty yards away. A subdued bellow sounded on the still air and a vast form, seven feet high at the shoulder with a six foot spread of antlers,plunged out of the thickets as if on the wings of a great wind. The little eyes of the bull moose burned red with a vindictive lust as he came on, for the creature O'Toole had been admiring was none other than the mate of his choice. Only the day before he had had to battle two jealous rivals for the favor of this captious cow. To the bull's heated brain O'Toole's discordant bray seemed just another boasting challenge to his lordship. He lowered his head and charged.

It is to O'Toole's eternal credit that he stayed to fight this monster, for never a Missouri mule was foaled without a heritage of stubborn courage. Brave as any maniac, he slewed his body around and strove to meet the onslaught with a battering broadside of his big iron-shod heels, but he was lifted up and flung backward as if struck by a locomotive, bowled completely over, his ribs all but staved in by the impact.

He struggled up, bawling and white-eyed, black lips furling above his big yellow teeth. He slewed round again, but so swiftly that his swinging body had not even left the ground, the vast bull ploughed him under again, to be clubbed and gored by threshing antlers and battered mercilessly by great splay hoofs that descended with the force of pile-drivers.

With a broken and frantic bray O'Toole came up once more, snorting, bucking and crow-hopping with all the power that was in his tough muscle-bound body, but he might as well have tried to battle an avalanche. He went down again with a crash, and when finally he broke clear, all bloody and lame, the last iota of fight had been hammered out of him. With the moose grunting and bawling behind him, he fled away through the trees as if the *windigo,* the dread demon of the North itself, were at his tail.

ABOUT mid-afternoon three days later, Johnny Marteau was hauling supplies back from the railroad eight miles south of camp. Beside Rock, the other mule, was hitched Dave, the most powerful of the camp horses. Marteau had halted to breathe his team a few minutes when Rock's head turned toward the deep woods and he voiced a muffled bray. Out of the forest came limping a lean, bedraggled mud-stained beast with low-hung head.

"Geezely Christmas!" cried Johnny, "if it ain't O'Toole!"

It was true, but what a specimen the old mule was! He was thin as a clothes-rack and covered with half-healed wounds, and his former villainous toothy leer of an Irish vandal was supplanted by the dull somnambulant look of a very tired draft animal. He came up meekly and stopped in front of the team with head at half mast.

"The old devil must have been fightin' a pack of wolves and a couple of circular saws," Johnny soliloquized. He got down from the wagon with his whip to give the renegade a good chastisement,

but on closer inspection he hadn't the heart. Apparently O'Toole had been utterly tamed and broken.

With the runaway tied to the back of the wagon, Johnny proceeded to camp, where his shouts brought Chuck McArthur from the bunkhouse.

"What did I tell you, boss? Your mule's back and there's no more fight left in him than a rabbit. Watch this."

While the onlookers held their breaths, Johnny walked directly into the lethal range of O'Toole's murderous heels and gave the culprit a resounding whack on the rump. O'Toole merely cringed slightly and a shiver ran over him from head to foot. With a grunt of satisfaction, Indian Andy likewise stepped up and walloped O'Toole for good measure, not once but half a dozen times, by way of paying off an old score. And O'Toole took it.

Apparently the seasoned wisdom of Johnny Marteau in the ways of the woods had been proven again and won the bet.

A week later Johnny was telling the new cook about the affair in the open door of the cook-house. Next day he was to leave for Ottawa in place of Chuck McArthur, and there is no doubt but what the little Frenchman was waxing over boastful as he talked.

Out of the woods came Indian Andy, to water his team after a hard day's work. For the past three days O'Toole had been back in harness beside his team-mate Rock, working methodically and causing no trouble whatever to his driver. Into his whitey-yellow eye, however, an old familiar look had begun to creep. Only Indian Andy had noted it.

Perhaps the half-breed was intending to speak of this fact to his boss as he halted the team before the cookhouse, or perhaps he was led to halt there by perverse fate.

A wild yell from cookie warned Johnny, just as O'Toole's gaunt body slewed round at him with something of the dark menace of a tornado's funnel. Johnny jumped behind the door, but with a splintering crash the door and part of its frame came down on top of him. To that he possibly owed life and limb during the next minute and a half, during which the old mule rattled broadside after broadside upon the fallen door and the man beneath.

And so it was that Chuck McArthur won the bet after all. Both he and Johnny went down to Vancouver next morning, however, Chuck to carry out the official business of the great Company, Johnny to find a "sawbones" who would extract certain slivvers and vulcanize certain nail-holes in his punctured pride and person.

"He will maybe soon die . . ."

MUCHO FANDANGO

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

PRIVATE WASHINGTON FULTZ groaned faintly and managed to open the heavy shutters of his eyes upon the sights of northern Mexico. Something was wrong, very wrong. Where were the Illinois Volunteers? Where was General Zachary Taylor's army? Where was the yellow road so thick with dust, leading southward to Saltillo and glory? All gone.

"A-a-a-yaw!" The gusty yawn almost dislocated his stiff jaw. He blinked around him, surveyed his extended legs with mild surprise, looked at the inert hands folded across his blue belly. His sodden senses told him that the February day was a hot one.

All the outside world was silent. This adobe room, with dirt floor and closed entrance door, was silent. The uncertain gaze of Fultz wandered about. A couple of small rough tables, cowhide stools, a short plank bar with jugs shelved behind it, a flabby pigskin sack hung on a peg—ah! Striped pig! He had learned what this bit of slang meant, anyhow.

He found himself bolstered in a corner. Posted behind the bar, hands widely planted on it, was a swarthy man in a very dirty yellow shirt, who grinned and spoke to him.

"Como 'sta, amigo?"

"Same to you," Fultz mouthed. His

tongue tasted like musty leather, his eyes burned, his head ached. He knew now where he was, and what ailed him.

He was in the adobe Game Cock, the liquor shop of the little Placita hamlet on a bypath of the Saltillo road. He had indulged his thirst, according to his means, with swigs from sundry pigskin sacks. Memory grew upon him.

"That damned striped pig!" he mumbled, and grimaced as his stomach turned over.

"Ugh! Pulque, they call it; hogwash, I say. Oh, my gosh! And I used to be a Christian."

The Mexican caught at the muttered word. "*Pulque, senor?* Fi' cents."

"No; shut your trap!" said Fultz, and belched. "Oh, gosh! I feel terrible."

The Mexican continued to grin amiably. Fultz groaned again, and shifted himself in his chair to easier posture.

The thud of hoofs sounded outside; they halted. The door swung. A figure entered, stamped to a table, and sat down. He was a short-legged, long-bodied old fellow, in a wide-brimmed straw hat and mustard colored linen duster. When he removed the hat to mop his forehead, he showed grizzled hair and a seamy mahogany face with generous nose and wide mouth.

The sight of this man, who might have been some farmer from the Illinois plowlands, stirred Fultz and made him homesick. The Mexican bustled forward with a jug and glass and a flood of salutations.

"*Agua!*" said the old man. His brevity indicated a scanty stock of Spanish. He had begun to liberally water his two fingers of whiskey, when his eye fell upon Fultz.

"It's safer to temper the water in these parts, on account of the dysentery. Will you join me, my friend?"

Abruptly, the door swung again and another man stamped in. A square, florid man in dusty blue and artillery red, wearing the shoulder-straps of a captain. He nodded to the old codger and joined him at the table.

Fultz stirred himself to reply to the invitation. It occurred to him that the old fellow was some contractor, up from the Rio Grande to place a few more barels of rotten beef and maggoty flour. He rose alertly enough, for his gullet craved action.

"Before I left home to see the elephant," he said, with a defiant glance at the officer, "I was particular what I drank and who I drank with, mister, but damned if I care right now!"

Coming forward, he established himself at the table, brimmed the glass set before him, and smacked down the whiskey. The old codger eyed his uniform.

"A volunteer? What regiment?"

"Second Illinois."

"The Army's gone on. What are you doing here?"

Fultz scowled. "I got left behind on sick list, due to rotten beef, Mister Nosey, and no thanks to you." The whiskey had invigorated him, heartened him. The old fellow took no offense at his words, but nodded and replied mildly.

"Then you'd better use caution. These roads are infested with cut-throats picking up stragglers."

"What's it to you?" demanded Fultz bitterly. "A private in this army gets to be no more'n a carcass anyhow."

The captain spoke out with sudden severity. "What's your name?"

"Fultz, and a damned good name too, where I come from."

"You need discipline," barked the officer, his face reddening. "You'll be reported for straggling. Join your command at once, or you'll be listed as a deserter."

"The worst punishment I can think of for those men who desert to the other side," observed the older man, "is to send 'em back there when we catch them." He rose, tossed a coin on the table, and transfixed Fultz with a glance

suddenly stern and cold. "Report to your command, my man, and stand punishment for straggling. That's my advice."

He turned to the entrance. With a final glare at Fultz, the captain followed.

"Thanks for the forty-rod, old cock, but damn your advice!" called Fultz after them. Through the open door he saw them mount horses, which an orderly held, and then ride away. The old fellow jogged loosely in his saddle, like a farmer. Fultz grunted, then found the Mexican grinning at him again.

"You run away, *si?*"

"See yourself."

"You in beeg feex now. You know who you talk to?"

Fultz swore. "That officer? Some damned bumptious pair of shoulder straps."

"Not him. That other hombre, the tailor general, *seguro!* You not know your beeg general?"

FULTZ emitted a gasp, staring at the Mexican. "What? That old farmer? The one I same as told to go to hell?"

"*Seguro, si!* The old tailor, old Zach. You go to Saltillo, you get punish' plenty."

"Old Zach Taylor? My gosh!" Fultz felt weak in the knees, remembering the officer and the orderly, and things he had heard about the general. "Taylor, who took Monterey?"

"He? Bah!" The Mexican spat in contempt. "Our General Ampudia shoot off all his powder and march out. But soon now, *mucho fandango; mucho, mucho!* Santa Ana coming, twenty t'ousand soldier, capture the old tailor and all his men. You go to Saltillo, what happen? You go to jail. Then Santa Ana come and kill you, sure. Better join Mexican army. Have a drink."

Fultz accepted. The dram served over the bar was fiery hot. It surged in a flame from stomach to head, and set the eyes to dancing. He had been in a cold sweat of fright over the way he had talked to the general—whose aide had his name, also.

Frightened, yes, as any green farmer might be, when shoved into a uniform and a campaign. He had sassed the general good and proper; it never occurred to him that the general would do anything except look him up and raise cain with him. Listed as a straggler? That was damned unjust, too. He was no straggler. Still, he could not prove it. He hastily reviewed the situation, as the liquor set his brain to work.

His sick leave ended, he had been ordered to report at Saltillo, had started there with some wagons. The teamsters dropped off here for a drink; so did he. They must have gone, he must have stayed. A small matter, except for that damned officer and the farmer general. Gosh! Now he was down for straggling. Punishment, sure. On top of that, the general himself would go after his hide.

Fultz had only one idea—to take the easiest way out of his perplexity. Desert? Not much. The idea simply did not register in his brain. The Mexican, leaning forward, spoke.

"Trouble, eh? You *amigo,* you all right. I show you. Come!"

He beckoned invitingly. In a perplexed haze, Private Fultz found himself following through another doorway, into a rear room. Here a man rose from a pallet. He was in Mexican shirt and pantaloons and had an unshaven blur of beard, but an American voice.

"Another bully boy straggler, huh? Maybe you're one of us?"

"I dunno," Fultz replied, in surprise. "Who are you?"

"Well, I was private Dan Welch, of Bragg's Third Artillery, but I'll damned soon be Sargint Welch of the Mexican army, and a leftenant when I've l'arned the lingo. And we don't have to fight agin' our own boys, neither. What happened to you, sojer?"

"Drinks, I guess," said Fultz. "I been in trouble, too; been sick, and sassed a corp'ral and he allows I'm just playin' sick, and works hell out of me. Then I'm to report at Saltillo and come here with some supply wagons and reckon I had a drink too many and got left. Gosh! Things just keep a-piling up, somehow."

His utter fumbling misery drew a hard grin from the other. Welch wagged his head and smacked his lips.

"Well, I got triced up by Bragg for talkin' like a man. I cut loose from the British army before this, and I've cut loose from this one. I'm for the other side, same as the boys who've already gone over. One hundred dollars gold, savvy? And a dollar a day pay, with rank of corp'ral or sargint, a commission ahead, and three hundred and twenty acres of good land after the war. That's worthwhile! Say, who were the men just now here?"

Fultz scratched his head. "A cap'n of regular artillery, and an old hoss in a snuff-colored coat. They questioned me pretty free and I talked up to 'em. I sassed 'em proper, and that officer took my name. The Mex says the old gent was Taylor himself."

"Holy smoke!" Welch stared at him. "And you sassed 'em, and they got your name! Boy, you're done for now! General Taylor himself? Hadn't you never seen him?"

"No. He'd left Monterey before we got there from below."

Welch whistled. "You're sure as hell in for it now, and double! I thought I recognized the voice. That cap'n was Brax Bragg, the one who rode me, and he's a terror. Old Taylor, he allows he'll discipline you volunteers. Now you'll be reported at Saltillo. Go back there and you'll sojer for life at digging latrines!"

"Yeah?" Fultz scowled. "I didn't enlist fer that."

The other guffawed. "No, nor get pinned by a lance, like a bug! Volunteered to march to the Halls of Montezumy and see the sights. Bet you ain't seen much."

"That's right." Fultz' tongue was thickened. "Never got into Monterey. Only the officers went in; the rest of us were kept five mile out."

"Well, it's us boys in the Saint Patricks who'll get the good liquor and the gals and an easy life with a pocketful o' gold! The San Patricio battalion, that's the ticket. All of us are in together, Irish, Britishers, Germans and the like—us who didn't see no sense in a land-grabbing war with a country who'll treat us right."

"I'm a born American," mumbled Fultz. "No deserter. I ain't craving to catch Jesse when I report, though. Sassed them officers, and one was General Taylor."

"Listen to me!" said Welch with a rasp. "Desert? Why not? It's promised we don't have to fire on our own folks. And that Old Hoss ain't wanting us; says he'll drum us back to the Mexicans if he catches us!"

"I got to sleep. Then I'll do something," muttered Fultz. "Straggler, eh? Report and be treated like a dog, or be listed as a deserter.

"Have a drink. Then think it over," said Welch.

Fultz gulped the proffered dram and lurched to the pallet. The floor and the walls swirled; he pitched forward and was dead to the world.

WHEN he wakened Welch was shaking him; there was a smell of food in the air. He had slept the day through, and a smoky candle filled the room with wavering shadows. As he ate, ravenously, Fultz saw a man squatting at one side, a Mexican in peaked hat, serape over his shoulder. Welch pointed to the figure.

"This is Pedro; speaks good English. He'll guide us and pass me along to

Santy Any. If you aim to face the music at Saltillo, you can turn off when daylight comes. Make up your mind as we go. The main roads ain't safe to use."

Fultz made no objections. Presently he followed the other two outside; horses awaited them here. They mounted and were off.

"*Mucho fandango* tomorrow!" said the Mexican gayly. "Everybody run away!"

"There'll be hell in these parts when Santy Any breaks through, and Old Zach's outfit is leggin' it from the lancers!" Welch agreed. The border was three hundred miles north. Anybody bottled up in Saltillo was done for, when Santa Ana and his twenty thousand hit them. Taylor had less than a quarter that many.

The mule trail twisted and turned among the brooding hills, plunged into sandy arroyos, passed the huts of goat ranches, and once went through a small village. Never a human being was sighted or heard; even the coyotes were silent tonight. All the land lay swept by the plague of fear—war, free-riding bandits, guerilla lancers, fugitives.

Occasionally the trail cut or merged with others, but Pedro kept steadily forward like a hound on the scent. Dan Welch lifted his voice from time to time at Fultz.

"Pushing wagons or working like nigger slaves or digging latrines, that's for you pet volunteers! I'll be living like a lord after you've rotted for a striped rag. If you're fool enough to go to Saltillo, you can dance to one tune and I'll take the other."

"I ain't craving to desert," Fultz objected. "It don't look so bad as it did, but all the same it ain't right. I wouldn't mind so much reporting I was drunk and takin' my medicine for it. But that ain't all. Things have piled up terrible. Now it's straggling, and sassing the general."

"And they're sure as hell laying to make an example of you," said Welch wickedly. "I wouldn't be surprised if they gave you a good whipping, a flogging like in the British army. Anyhow, you'd be better off on the Mex side. These Mexicans are terrible fighters. They don't think anything of sticking a knife in your guts to see you squirm."

"Well, I ain't deserting, I guess," Fultz rejoined. "Not that it's so bad, maybe, but it just don't seem right to me. I dunno what to do."

Midnight came and passed. The trail was winding through a broken cañon with sudden turns. Pedro, heading them, had broken into lilting song, a pleasant tune wherein one word, "*segundo,*" was repeated over and over.

"What's that saygoondo you're singing about, hombre?" spoke up Fultz. Pedro half turned in the saddle, with his gay laugh.

"I sing of *mucho fandango, amigo! El segundo,* that is what you call 'cousin.' My cousin is a bad man. He will maybe soon die."

He went on singing. By the broadening of the starry horizon ahead, the cañon was about to end; the last of its craggy uplifts waited on the left. Just beyond, Pedro slackened pace and stooped to fumble at his saddle-girth, still singing.

Fultz heard a swish in the air. A whipping lash clapped down over his shoulders. As it drew taut, he was violently plucked out of the saddle. A cry of startled alarm escaped him. Then the shock of the fall, a flash of red, and he was whirling in a black void.

SHE wakened once more to the voice of Welch and to water being poured down his throat. Gasping, strangling, he managed to sit up. His face was wet, his head and shoulders ached.

"Damned near busted your neck," said Welch. "Sit tight."

Fultz obeyed. The air had lightened

with pale dawn; he was in a rock-edged hollow. Standing horses, a dozen squatting men enveloped in serapes, eyes fixed intently upon him, carbines at hand, cigarettes aglow. The coiled ropes on the saddles caught his attention and roused his anger.

"I got a lasso thrown on me," he blurted out. "Who did that?"

"No trick of mine," Welch spat nervously. "You were second in line. That's what the song meant—*segundo* is second."

"Yes, yes," it was Pedro who spoke, smilingly. "I am captain of these men. I did not want mistakes made."

"Bandits, hey?" snapped Fultz angrily. "You brought us into a gang of bandits!"

"No, Mexicans. You will not go to Saltillo. You will help Mexico instead of fighting her; your shoes to one, your pantaloons to another, your coat, your shirt. Your body to the birds of Mexico."

"Murder, is that it?" cried Fultz. "How about Welch here?"

"He goes to join the brave Americanos with Santa Ana."

"So will Fultz, here," spoke out Welch hastily. "Sure he will! He ain't heading for Saltillo to get a lance in his guts when Santy Any comes. Not when he can go along with us to a place where men are fair treated."

"It is for him to say," said Pedro smoothly. "Well, *amigo?*"

Fultz choked upon a rush of stinging gall. Go over? He had no choice. Here was death. Behind lay the Old Hoss, the high-talking captain, the volunteer officers on the strut, and a charge of straggling. Ahead was safety.

"I'll go over, sure," he said. Welch let out a whoop.

"That's the lad! And you can thank me for saving your hide. They'd have put a knife into you if I hadn't said you were for the same place I am. It's all right, Pedro."

"Santa Ana and liberty!" exclaimed Pedro, and spoke with his men. They flung at Fultz black looks and curses, flashing grins and friendly words; a mixed lot.

Food was brought forth; sun-dried beef and hard, coarse bread-cakes. Then to horse and away.

Where Santa Ana's army was, Washington Fultz did not know, but Pedro evidently did. Their trail took them over high, tinted desert country, guarded by bleak and purple-shadowed mountains. A region abandoned by day as by night.

"You knew I was riding into a lasso, blast you!" said Fultz to Welch. The latter winked and nodded.

"For your own sake, partner. Saltillo wouldn't do for you; I don't want any man squealing on me. We ain't going to fight our own folks, remember; that's the promise. I was in the ranks at Monterey when the Old Hoss took it and the Mexicans marched out. There was Riley himself riding on a gun carriage; and the things our boys said for his ears were no fare-ye-well; they were as bad as stripes to him, by the way he looked. Dan Welch wants none o' that, to his face or behind his back."

"Who's Riley?"

"Cap'n of the Saint Patricks. Used to be sargint in the Third Infantry. It's him we sarve under ahead; he'll welcome us, you bet. You're not sorry?"

"Glad," said Fultz, and meant the words. "Glad to be rid of the whole mess and in for a new game, so long as we're not to fight the boys we marched with."

The irregulars bore steadily on, rested at noon, rode again through the afternoon. Saltillo was not sighted. Mountains bulwarked the west and shortened the course of the sun; the trail veered westward, traversing slopes of buff and purple rocks.

In the twilight Fultz rounded a spur, and saw a great dust ahead; the trail rolled out upon a windy desert valley,

flowing from the southern base of a bare plateau. Here the plain was dotted with scores of desert palms, and peopled with an army—infantry, cavalry, artillery, just making camp. The twenty thousand of Santa Ana's host! Fultz felt his heart thumping in his ears as he looked.

"Here they are and here we be!" sang out Welch exultantly. "Here's the side to be on! These lads will swaller old Taylor at one chaw, and Bragg to boot. Now to find Riley, and we're all set."

EASILY done, and before darkness fell. A red-faced man in the shabby red and yellow trappings of a Mexican artillery captain; hard stubbled phiz, an over-bold stare in his gray eyes, challenge in look and voice. Such was Captain Tom Riley of the San Patricio battalion.

"A volunteer, is it, along with a regular? That's good!" said he, viewing the pair with satisfaction. "When you eased off with a little liberty, they put the screws on you, eh? Well, you've come over just in time, lads."

"Looks so," admitted Fultz. "Going to be a battle?"

"*Mucho fandango*, you bet," said Riley, vengefully. "You two will be put in uniform and assigned, immediately. We've lots o' clothes, stripped off hombres who dropped on the way. You'll help sarve the eighteen-pounders."

Another man came up with news, joyously vindictive. Fultz caught snatches of the talk. Taylor with four thousand men, all his infantry green volunteers. And only ten miles away, at the north end of the pass through the ridge yonder!

"We've had a hell of a march, up from San Luis Potosi through frozen country, but here we are," said Captain Riley. "And next thing the Old Hoss knows, we'll be into him at daylight, our lancers will cut him off from Saltillo, and he's in the bag."

As the light waned the breeze increased, until the valley was swept by half a gale, stinging cold. There were no fires. Only officers had tents. In his new cotton uniform, Fultz shivered, and his teeth chattered as he huddled with his comrades of the Saint Patrick battalion.

Deserters all. Irish, German, Polish, Swedish, riffraff for hire, and not one born under the flag they had deserted. Some, like Welch and Riley, had served under the flags of other countries, but voiced allegiance to none. Fultz sensed a bitter bravado in the talk, as they huddled and smoked. Brag as to how they had come it over officers and guards; a constant resentment at the report that Taylor would not have them back.

Not even worth a drumhead trial and a firing squad, eh? They'd show him! To hell with a service that didn't value smart men, and hooray for one that did!

Some of them had marched out of Monterey with Riley, in Mexican ranks, amid catcalls from the American ranks. Well, it would be another story tomorrow! Old Zach on the run, with money, wine and girls for the taking in Saltillo. Twenty thousand crack infantry, lancers, hussars. And old Taylor, sitting there in the pass with four thousand recruits who had never heard a shot fired!

The terrific wind tore through the valley as if blowing off a field of ice. Spooned together in the lee of parked gun carriages, the battalion tried to sleep. Fultz wakened, chilled to the bone, at the sound of cheers. A lurid light came from down the valley, where Mexicans had set fire to the palms.

"That's hell in a blaze, and ag'in orders, too," said somebody. "But like the rest of us, them poor devils ain't been warm for a week at a stretch."

Fultz dozed, and wakened again, this time to the tramp of stumbling feet. A dark column was marching, with rhyth-

mic clink of equipment, for the pass. Night still hung over the valley, but the forward movement had begun.

After an interminable time, the sky paled, the vast camp stirred, the men were roused by voice and touch. The day's rations were passed about by a detail, and poor enough they were—a finger of dried beef, two biscuits, a hunk of sugar loaf. Fultz heard Dan Welch cursing the rations as the battery was hooked up to the stiffened horses.

On the move now, the army in columns breasting through the cold gray. It was still early dawn, under an ominously heavy sky, when the caissons, the eighteens and twenty-fours, rumbled into the pass. It was long and narrow, reeking with the scent of sweat, choking with dust. The sun had risen above the misted mountains when the battalion filed out of the pass to surprise the Americans; but the hearty curses of Captain Riley, riding in the lead, heralded the news.

Smoke from a clutter of ruins, but never an American uniform in sight.

"Stole away, the old fox!" rasped Welch. Fultz turned to hear a ripple of cheers roll up. A bevy of glittering officers galloped along the column; there went General Santa Ana and his staff.

The column pressed on and on, the valley open to their march, mile after mile. It was ten miles farther when the rutted road rose to a low pass. The battery toiled on and over. Ahead, in the valley, the vanguard had halted. The fox was run to earth. The battery closed in with new eagerness, and the main column quickened pace.

To the straining gaze of Washington Fultz, it was a proper army. Hardy troops, eager despite a desert march of close on three hundred miles. Foot regiments of green and red, blue and white, blue and red; artillery, red and yellow, blue and red; cavalry, yellow and blue, red and green, guidons and lance pennons fluttering, knots of officers with their glasses leveled. A mile away, the winding valley was pinched between barren slopes, fluted with ravines and ridges, backed by gaunt mountains.

There, untried volunteers for the most part, and an old codger in a straw hat and farmer coat brought to bay. Fultz felt another heartleap at memory of the rugged face and the keen eyes of that man in the Game Cock. It didn't seem a fair game; lucky he was out of it, and not called upon to fight his own people.

Signs of life, yonder; moving dots among the ridges, glint of musket barrel, glint of brass cannon, glint of red and white and blue. Captain Riley cursed afresh.

"That's the Narrows—La Angostura. I've seen the map. Six miles farther, lads, to Saltillo and liquor and girls! A rancho called Buena Vista in between, at the end of that gorge. Nothing to stop us now."

"Except Old Zach," said Dan Welch, with a sneer. "And damn well posted, too. Cavalry no good yonder. Heavy guns no good off the level. Light artillery and infantry work, and the Old Hoss knows it."

"You'll see when we open up with these guns, my lad."

"Hey! We're going to shoot into our own folks!" cried out Fultz in dismay. "Welch said we'd not do that. Said it was promised us."

Riley gave him a savage look. "You'll work a gun by orders, or I'll spread-eagle you to a spare wheel. Hurray! Here we go at last!"

"All I want is a chance at that damned Bragg," growled Welch. Washington Fultz swallowed hard, watched, gulped.

BUGLES sounded. A column of infantry were off on that trot for the slopes on the right. They filed into ravines, vanished, emerged, always a little higher. Smoke-puffs broke out. A countering

column of blue and gray climbed another ridge to meet them. Gunfire came echoing along the valley; heavy reports of muskets, sharply ringing cracks of rifles. Gradually it was all lost to sight.

Dots along the ridges, smoke-puffs, on through the afternoon and into the twilight; nothing else. In here the sun set early. A howitzer shell from a Mexican battery burst between the two armies. The Mexican troops were cheering their victory, as they deemed it. A regimental band blared out, the gorgeous figure of Santa Ana rode along the lines with shouted words.

"Sure and why not?" said an Irish voice, somewhere near Fultz. "Rations of music and a speech, by reason of it's being Washington's birthday!"

A spasm of queer regrets seized upon Fultz; the words woke something in him.

"For a round o' bully beef and hardtack," swore Welch, "I'd even drink Bragg's health, with my fingers crossed!"

Washington's birthday, in this year of 1847; Fultz found himself cursing the whole blasted mess he was in. The gloom deepened. Another gale, with gusts of cold rain, whipped the camp. The battery stayed in position, the men huddling low in their thin uniforms. The baggage was in the rear. All the army stayed in position, braving out the night, warmed only by the assurance of victory on the morrow.

Up yonder twinkled a few red dots where another army, that had found fuel, also braved out the night. Fultz was oppressed, heartsick—not with the cold or hunger, but because those few men up yonder would be wiped out on the morrow. After all, damn it, he was one of them! Americans with their backs to the wall, and he would be in the firing squad that faced them.

A scant four thousand of them, under a plain old codger dressed like a farmer going to town — farmhands, most of them. Damn it, he was a farmhand too. And there were the colors. A man's country was where the colors were, and no thanks asked for, no belly-aching grudge to be reckoned.

Fultz stirred, moved, stole away. This accursed San Patricio outfit! Americans? Not a one of them. A battalion of no country, no colors. Outlaws, hirelings, shedding one uniform for another and firing on the old one. And Washington Fultz of Illinois had sunk to this level, because he was afraid to report in as a straggler! To hell with all this.

A figure uprose before him suddenly, and he halted.

"So you're off, are you?" said Welch in a low voice. Fultz bristled.

"Yes, and be damned to you!" he growled. "You aiming to stop me?"

"No. You're a blasted fool; there won't be a man alive yonder tomorrow night. But I'd give my soul to be going with you."

Fultz caught his breath, as he peered at the dim figure.

"You—what? You mean it? By God, then come along! The both of us—"

"Not me," said Welch. "I'm a regular; that's different. I ain't got the guts. You were drunk and scared; they'll take you back. Won't matter—you'll all be wiped out with morning. Tell Bragg for me I hope to see him in hell; that's the only place I'll serve with him. Oh, be damned to you, and get along! There'll be many a good man dead tomorrow, and it may be heads down for Danny Welch—get along, get along, you fool!"

Dan Welch turned and was gone into the darkness, with a choked voice, like a damned soul. Tomorrow he would be firing into his old mates, despite all promises.

Fultz went on his way. Determined now, he was alert, cautious, stubborn. He found no trouble in passing through the camp; he was suddenly joyous, buoyed up by a great happiness, as though a tremendous weight had fallen from him. A fool? No doubt of it, and

dead tomorrow with the rest. But better to be dead with them than alive with these yellow curs.

No one bothered him. On every hand men were moving to and fro, stamping their feet, threshing their arms, stung by the wind and sleety rain. Almost before he knew it, he was through the blinded guards, and beyond the line. Out there advanced pickets were scattered about, but the glow of cigarettes betrayed the nearest, and Fultz slipped past easily.

He had a blundering mile to go. And what then? What greeting for a Mexican uniform, and for the deserter in it? Well, no great matter; everybody would be dead by tomorrow night.

Clouds blackened the low sky. Fultz kept off the road and stumbled along over the rough ground between road and creek. Then, so suddenly that it terrified him, he was right into a cleverly posted picket. The quick hail was round American:

"Halt! Who goes there?" It halted him, startled him; for an instant he crouched in panic. The voice came again: "Answer or I'll blow hell out of you!"

"No! Don't shoot!" he chattered. "Washington—Washington Fultz. I'm coming in. Don't shoot!"

"Advance and gimme a look at you."

Fultz stumbled on. A match flared; the peering eyes of the holder briefly shone, like those of an animal. A voice of alarm leaped up, as the match died.

"A greaser spy with the countersign! Here, boys, over here! A spy! Get him!"

Fultz ducked, sidestepped, and ran for it in swift terror. A gun banged out and the ball whistled past; other guns split the darkness. Pausing, he heard the picket cry out in explanation.

"He gave the countersign—Washington. Said his name was Fultz. A smart dodge! Then I saw his uniform. He's legged it."

Fultz went on, blindly. The countersign? Washington's birthday, of course; his own name had fooled the picket.

The Mexican patrols up the valley were startled, were calling out and firing, blazing away at random. Both sides were nervous, alert for every sound. Hastening on, Fultz blundered off to the left. The western slopes had been less thickly invested than the others; they were steep and deeply cut, a defense in themselves.

Over here where he climbed and slipped, the gusts of rain were less severe. The beacon campfires to the northeast gradually flickered out; the valley below lay black and silent. After a time he could go no farther, and gave up the attempt. He crouched where he was, on a small shelf somewhat shielded from the wind. Thus protected from wind and rain, hugging the warm earth, he presently relaxed in grateful slumber.

A DISTANT thunder clap echoed from mountain to mountain, and then another. Fultz came wide awake and started up, dazed to find that the full day had come. Again a cannon shot, reverberating along the peaks, followed by a rattle of muskets and rifles. He gained a vantage point and stared.

The battle had opened. The ridges were hazed by powder smoke; watching, Fultz dimly realized that the Mexicans must have turned the American flank. Up there, cannon replied to cannon. Shells burst above the red and green column on the ridge, the column disintegrated and broke for cover. American shells burst above the ravines.

Now, in the south, bugles shrilled out; it was reveille, the sun was about to rise. Fultz looked down, and his jaw fell. Troops in blue, in the occasioal gray of home boys, were filing to positions on the fluted slopes. Regimental flags streamed in the light breeze. A battle, then, a real battle! The brass of cannon, the red stripings of artillerymen shone

in the brightening light. One battery in on this west side of the road, another in the road, other batteries farther to the east. And now Santa Ana was coming, a howitzer boomed the signal. The columns were there, three divisions, one in the road and two east of it.

Three dense lines, all the hues of the rainbow, lance tips sparkling, pennons fluttering, bands playing, legs rising and falling in cadence, cavalry squadrons massed like the squares of a checker board. American cheers floated across from those eastern slopes. Fultz heard, and gulped.

What was happening? Impossible to see under the drift of smoke, movements too fast to discern. A series of mêlées by detachments, snifting here and there, the Mexican troops pressing in on the American left, small columns of blue and gray running over the ridges, volleying, advancing, holding ground—

Retreat, by heavens! A regiment in gray broke back and ran helter skelter through ravines to the road, and kept going down the road in a frenzied mass. Not Illinois, thank the Lord! Some other flag. The Mexican lines were rushing forward. A battery of three guns fronted them—three guns against a thousand muskets at scorching range. The cannoneers stood, worked like mad; the spurting guns smasked wide lanes through the enemy masses. But those Mexicans came on. The battery horses were down, the men were dragging back the pieces by ropes, firing again—oh! They got away with two guns. And here were lancers.

Lancers in column, hot after the broken regiment. The riders took the wounded in stride, scarcely pausing as they jabbed down with their long points. And the artillery wheeling, dashing, pausing to spout fire and thunder, dashing again!

Almost unconscious of his own actions, Fultz had left his shelter and was running, advancing. Here on this side of the narrow valley was no fighting. So far as he could see, the day was lost. To his frantic eyes, the blue and gray were hemmed in by smoke, the center of the enemy was driving through. He had known it must happen, and now it was happening—and over there, with those colors, was the place for Washington Fultz of Illinois.

Before he knew it, he had reached the road. A wounded volunteer was firing. Then another. The balls whistled past him. His uniform! These were no clothes to die in. The road was slashed across with dry washes. He went diving into one, crawled on, was making a zigzag way from cover to cover, when a thudding clatter of hooves flattened him by its warning. Lancers, here, a roving squad of them. A lance-point glittered and drove at him, was jerked aside just in time. With a wide grin on his swarthy visage, the lancer trotted on and was gone.

This damned uniform! It changed friends to foes, foes to friends. It shamed him, where men of his own kind were fighting and dying. He went on, and came to abrupt and startled halt.

On the lower ground and down the road, a tremendous column of lancers were moving forward. Fifteen hundred of them, colored by companies and squadrons; gray horses, blacks, roans and bays, in masses of glowing uniform-hues, lance points jogging, every horse in step. They were making for a line in gray and in red and white—red shirts, white trousers. The line deployed, an opening *V*.

The gay column trotted on, slackened as though puzzled—then rifles gushed out smoke in a crackling fire. The head of the column shriveled like paper in a flame. The men in gray came running in with bayonets; those in red shirts leaped with bowie knives slashing, parried the lances, seized the bridles of rearing horses—clinging, thrusting, slashing, until the remnants of the lancer column wheeled and went tearing away for

safety down a sheltered side ravine.

"Hurray for Mississippi!" Fultz found himself yelling unheard. Colonel Jeff Davis and his men, in the red coats; those in gray, from Indiana. Mad exultation seized on him. Cannon still bellowed here and there, and now were dominated by a heavier bass roar that shook the ground. The heavy guns of the San Patricio battalion. Riley was in action!

And, by the smoke, there were the guns, posted on a ridge and vomiting shell and canister into the ranks ahead. The devils! Fultz shook his fist at them, cursed them, whirled about at a deafening, rending smash. A thunderbolt ripping down, another tremendous crepitation, then a sweeping blast of rain that deluged the valley and doused the battle to a lull.

FULTZ went running forward, was across the creek and stumbled. A dead soldier all asprawl, a blue jacket—here was a prize! He flung away his cotton blouse and jacket, stripped off the blue coat and donned it. He buckled on the cartridge belt and picked up the musket that lay close by. Bare-headed, in blue coat and faded Mexican blue cotton pantaloons, he ran on.

The sun shone again. The struggle was not over. Cannon were again roaring away. Fultz staggered on weak legs. He saw a terrible thing; a battery section of two guns opposing the inrush of a column. A hugh column; Santa Ana was making his final and most determined try for victory. The battery was unsupported. The enemy came on and on, flooded in and around the two guns, had them. Here was the spearhead thrusting straight through the American center.

No! Another battery section, with tired horses at a stagger, came over the ridge and whirled into action front. Fultz was running toward them; he was there, on the spot, with the guns, everything close before his eyes. Three blackened guns, a handful of men, the sweated red face of the stocky captain in blue and artillery red—a face he had seen before. The face of the florid man whom Dan Welch hated. Bragg, that was it!

Before the waiting muzzles, the boil of fierce dark faces surmounting the ridge, the steady onrush of the Mexican ranks, their bayonets flash. Bragg turned and bellowed at the figure standing idle. Fultz knew the words were for him.

"Here, you, get to work! Pass ammunition. By Gawd, I asked support and there's none! This is a fight."

Fultz dropped his rifle, and fell frantically to work with the other men. His gaze cleared. Suddenly he saw another face he knew, heard another remembered voice.

"Major Bliss and I will support you, Captain. I've nobody else to send."

The old codger in the brownish coat, by heaven! Fultz gaped. He was sitting his nag sideways, with a tall major beside him. Now he spoke again, more briskly.

"Stop those fellows, Captain Bragg, and the day's won. It's the last try. Double shot your guns and give 'em hell!"

Musketry crashed out in ragged volleys. Lead whistled; the guns belched. Fultz worked like a madman, running to and fro with ammunition, doing whatever was ordered. The smoke choked him; he could see nothing, but he was in the fight and a fierce joy burned and blazed in him. In the fight and where he belonged, live or die!

What happened, he had not the least idea, but there came an ease in the tension. The deafening bellows had ceased, orders had ceased; cheers were ringing up, to right and left. American infantry were there, moving rapidly. A final crashing round from the guns sent the Mexican ranks back, sheeted with smoke and crimson spatters. The bugles

sounded recall—for the last time.

And now, to Fultz, there seemed to be an uncanny stillness. Sweating, panting, gasping in his dry throat, he found a horse beside him, and looked up to the gray eyes of the old codger in tattered brownish coat; the eyes were fastened upon him. He saw the mahogany face take on a quizzical squint, and heard the mild words.

"Hello! So you didn't like it over there, my man?"

He could say nothing. He could not move or speak. He realized that Bragg had wheeled his guns again. The heavy pieces of the San Patricio battalion were booming cruelly, but the little six-pounders were served like mad. They spoke and spoke, covered men and guns with rapid bursts, showered them with canister, silenced them. The old man on the horse caught Bragg's attention and spoke to him.

"Never mind them, Captain; let them get their guns out and go." He swung around and stooped over a little, and touched Fultz on the shoulder.

"Find your Second Illinois—was that it? Now you're here, you'd better stay. *Verbum sap,*—a word to the wise, my man. Go change your pants—and don't damn my advice this time."

He was gone, his horse moving on. Fultz stood with a lump in his throat, then glanced down at the cotton pantaloons. They had betrayed him to that shrewd eye; but his own actions here had betrayed what was inside of him, also.

Fultz looked out across the valley. The San Patricio battalion had limbered up and was moving away with the broken Mexican detachments. The sun was setting. There went the deserters, and Dan Welch, poor devil! And here, with the colors, was Washington Fultz.

"And I'd better find me a pair of pants quick," muttered Fultz. "*Mucho fandango,* huh ? You were damned right about that, Dan Welch—but we're the ones doing the dancing this night!"

The TRAIL AHEAD

The longest novelette that has appeared in *Adventure* in several years—"Hark, Africa!" by Joel Townsley Rogers, in which a fat doomed Frenchman comes to overlord in the Cameroons, and Nbem the drummer sweats and cake-walks and thunders out his booms and bawas:

"*Ob ba bawa!* Pause and listen! Pause and listen, chiefs and peoples! This is Nbem, the son of Bwamba, drumming on the great call-drum! A new commandant, a new white lord of lords! He is your father! He is your mother! He is the lord and sun above you!"

A poem by MacKinlay Kantor, noted for his "Long Remember" and his poems of the Civil War—a poem called "Dust," which we think will be clipped and quoted as an epic of the dust-bowl.

The next instalment of "No Quarter," by Maurice Walsh.

Adventure 15c

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TRADITIONS OF THE DEEPWATERMEN

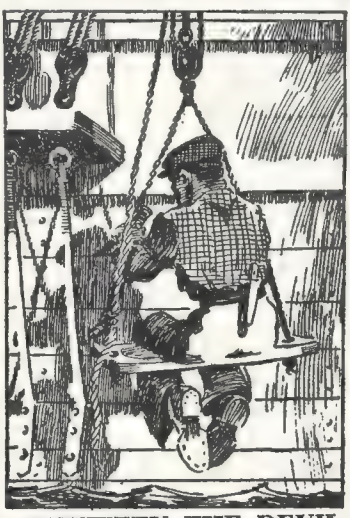
by WINDAS

● ABOVE-BOARD ●

We borrow this phrase from early day merchantmen, whose custom it was to parade the whole ship's company on deck when approaching another vessel. This showed honesty of purpose, because pirates hid most of their crew *below board* (under the bulwarks) until close.

● TAKEN ABACK ●

This term, meaning to be astonished or embarrassed, actually refers to the position of any square-rigged vessel, which, by reason of squalls or poor steering, has her sails blow backward against her masts.

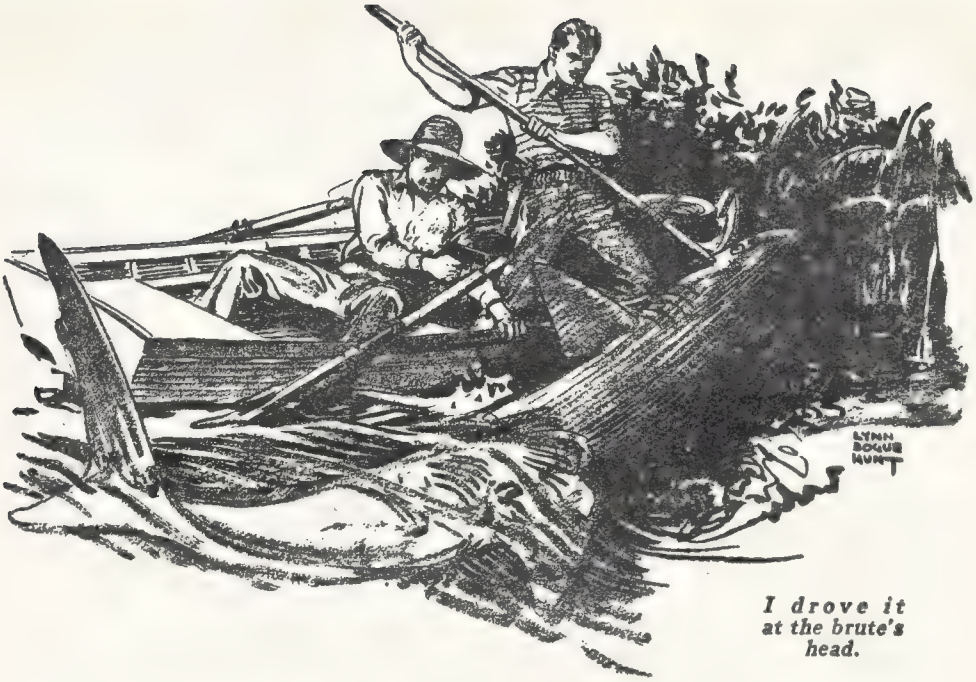


● BETWEEN THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP ●

An expression today meaning uncomfortable circumstances. It originated at the time of wooden sailing ships. The seam next below the main wale was the longest and hardest to caulk, and was nicknamed "The Devil." In order to caulk it, one swung outboard on a bosun's chair, and was thus literally "between the Devil and the water."

● PURSER ●

This officer received his title because originally he bought and paid for cargoes, hired and paid off the crew, etc. In other words, he kept the ship's purse, so was dubbed "the purser".



I drove it at the brute's head.

THE SHARK ON LARGO FLATS

A fact story by C. BLACKBURN MILLER

INCREDIBLE stories are told of sharks—their ferocity, tenacity of life and enormous size. Tales are spun of combats between man and fish, in which the former, armed only with a knife, has emerged victorious. These may or may not be true. I question them because I am familiar with the tough texture of a shark's hide and know the difficulty of getting a knife point through that rough, gray armor.

Whereas only a few varieties of sharks are recognized as man-eaters, I would hesitate to trust any sizable shark under conditions favorable to himself. Their voracious appetite will impel them to strike at anything that arouses their curiosity. I have seen them attack a wooden box floating on the surface and tear it to pieces. Bottles, old shoes and newspapers have been found in their stomachs, testifying to their heedless haste.

I have personally experienced many encounters with sharks, catching them on rod and reel, harpooning them and standing off their attacks with a butcher knife lashed to a pole. But the one that stands out is an episode on the flats off the coast of Florida.

The authorities to whom I have applied for information have given me but slight satisfaction, classifying it as probably a "nurse shark." I have never known this variety, however, to display the ferocity exhibited by this one specimen, nor does the color coincide. This shark was red. Some reader may volunteer the information that will clear up the situation and classify the species. I give you the tale as it happened.

IT WAS a warm day in late April. The shimmering waters of the Key Largo flats reached away to the black belt of the mangrove islands, which threw a curved arm of protection against the outer sea.

The shadow of a pelican passed across the seamed face of Zeke Simmonds, my guide, who stood in the bow of our boat and scanned the calm surface for signs of tailing bonefish.

Finally hauling in his short anchor cable, he took up the oars and rowed diligently across the shallow flats. Our trail was conspicuous by a filmy wake of white, coral mud. I watched with fascination the staghorn coral and lumps of sponges growing on the bottom. Vivid colored fish darted away at our approach and twice I saw the swirl of a frightened bonefish. Out beyond the magenta colored reefs lay the deep blue of the gulf stream, over which moved the white hull of a distant cruiser.

We anchored finally near a pass between two keys, where the water deepened. My guide assured me it was an excellent place for large bonefish. My hook, baited with shrimp, was cast out.

An hour slipped by. The tide was flooding and the water deepened perceptibly on the flats. A flock of white ibis rose above the green barrier of the mangroves and winged away, resembling a flurry of snow flakes against the deep blue of the sky. In the shadow of the overhanging branches, I noted the high dorsal fin of a cruising shark, and as he moved out in the sunlight, I saw with astonishment that the fin was not black, but red. I stood in the stern watching the long, sinuous red body of the fish. Zeke gave the fin a long stare, and then stumbling into the bow, yanked up the anchor in haste, and at once was rowing madly away.

I began rigging the harpoon. Zeke motioned for me to put the harpoon away. I obeyed, awed by his evident terror, and sat quietly until he drew up at the landing.

"Now, Zeke," I said. "What is all this fuss you are making about a shark? I never knew that you were afraid of them."

Zeke told me this:

"George Ball and me come down frum Maine four year ago. We'd went to livin' up near Gardiner's Cove fer quite a spell, and we decided to drag ourselves a net acrost some of the flats.

"Me and George got ourselves a whale of a net and went on out there one still moonlight night. It was durned quiet, you could hear the big gray-backed mullet jumpin' all over the place. I figured I'd stay in the boat and pay out the net to George, so as she wouldn't git afoul nor nuthin'. He wasn't out more'n a couple of spits when I seen somethin' black sticking up out of the water. It was wedge-shaped and then I seen as how it was movin' with a big silver ripple rollin' in front of it, and she cut through just as slick as a scythe blade. It was aheadin' right for George.

"George looked around and then he let out a yell and started wading towards the boat. I seen the thing change its course and quicken its speed. George was about ten feet from the boat. Even in the moonlight I could see the fin of the fish was red. Just then George screamed and went down. For a minute I couldn't see nothin'—just George's arms and legs comin' out and goin' under. I grabbed aholt of the boat hook and just as the big fish swirled near the boat, I let him have it in the head and then I hit him again, but it didn't do no good, jest left a long white mark. I got holt of George's arm and drug him aboard. Then I saw how his leg was bitten clean off above the knee and he was a-spoutin' blood like a fire hose. I tied a rope around his leg but he fainted and by the time I got him ashore and to the doctor he had bled to death."

SEVERAL days went by and I discovered that Zeke had disappeared. I was anxious to try my luck for bonefish by moonlight but I needed a guide.

Lant Lorimer had been recommended. A weedy, fever-ridden cracker was Lant,

with wiry hair and a squint. Raised in the Everglades, he was wise in the lore of fish and fowl that lived in the waters and swamps of Florida.

A full moon hung over the ocean, a moon the color of a Florida orange, which spread its path of glittering silver over the still waters of the flats. As Lant rowed on, I noticed that nervousness seemed to possess him. He would glance over his shoulder at times and twice he ceased rowing to peer out over the moonlit water.

Suddenly in the moonpath there appeared a triangular object, protruding above the surface. Lant reached hurriedly for his carbine, which he had stowed in the bow.

"What's the matter, Lant? That's only a board wedged in the mud."

"Shore. Yo're right," he agreed in a relieved tone. "I thought it mought be somethin' else."

We rowed on to where a shell bar marked the channel bountary, and there I insisted upon anchoring.

"Tain't fitten'," warned my guide. Water's too deep. I'd a heap rather be back yonder," and he waved an arm towards the distant shore. "It makes me eetch to be out here, like flees on my hide."

"Lant," and I leaned forward, "did you ever hear of the red shark around here?"

"Lord, yes. I hearn of it and I seen it. It's red with a long white mark running down his haid. He hants these flats when the south moon's over an' it's a sorry place to be outen on when that red devil is aroun'."

"Why?" I asked, "are you so afraid of this shark?"

"I know about Charlie Mersey's girl," he said. "She come frum the piney-woods an' didn't know nuthin' nohow, no more did he because he spent his time gatorin' up in the glades. They come out here oncet. Folkses should a' told 'em but they didn't, an' it was hot so they went in swimmin'. Lizzie, that was Charlie's girl's name, went wadin' out lookin' fer deep water when Charlie saw a big red shark headin' towards her. He yelled but it wuz too late, fer it got her down and chomped her terrible. She was daid when he got her."

The moon was high in the heavens now and from the thick foliage of the mangroves sounded the sweet song of a mocking bird.

"Charlie tol' his brother that he'd get even and he spent a heap of time out there on the flats, allus keepin' his eye peeled for the Red Devil an' when he was ashore he'd allus be asharpenin' his harpoon. Well, he an' his brother Eph was down on the flats one day and Eph was wadin' aroun' lookin' for conchs when he heard Charlie yell and saw him start to push his boat through the water. There was a big fin stickin' up not very far ahead of the boat and Eph saw Charlie grab his harpoon. Then he threw it, an' fer a second it stood up straight. Eph says there was a big splash an' he saw the shark turn and drive right at the boat. He hit it a big wallop and the boat tilted up. Charlie lost his balance and fell over backwards in the water. There was a lot more splashin' and Charlie yelled fer Eph. Eph was scairt to go on over but he went an' when he got there he found his brother floatin' face downwards with all his belly torn out—an' if you don't noways care I reckon we'd better be gitten home."

I decided to take the field against the murderer.

I found a boatman, quite by accident, along the docks of Miami—a French-Canadian who, having fought with a steward on a coastal liner, had deserted ship and was looking for a job. Pierre Watteau, it sounded like. He was of slight build with curly black hair and narrow eyes.

"Pierre," I said, "I will give you a job helping me to harpoon a shark."

We loaded the necessary supplies into the car and with a light cedar row-boat on the trailer, set out for Gardiner's Cove.

I HAD two special harpoons made from a pair of broad files, upon whose temper I could depend. These had double barbs and were sharpened to a razor edge. To these were fitted removable shafts, and a two hundred foot length of three-eights manila rope was carefully coiled in a tub, which was to be placed in the bow. A stabbing lance, with a broad keen blade and a six foot haft of tough ash, was an important item of our armament which was completed by a .45 calibre automatic pistol and a .38 calibre revolver. I spent time making my preparations, because if this shark was as vicious as reported, a light boat was not great protection against a possible charge. In the shallow water of the flats any threshing and tail lashing at close quarters could make trouble for us.

We went out with all our equipment in the gray of a misty dawn. The tide was flooding and I was hoping that we would not be troubled with wind.

By the time we had reached the channel by the outer bar, the rising sun had dispelled the haze and I could sweep the expanse of flats with my glass. No fin was visible, however.

It was perhaps an hour later that I caught a movement in the water far over by one of the mangrove keys and keeping my glass on the spot finally discerned a fin in the shadows.

As we drew closer I knew that the shark to whom the fin belonged was a large one. He swam along indolently, skirting the keys and then describing short questing circles as if in search of food. I had assumed my position in the bow and cleared the harpoon for action, seeing that the line was coiled and that the stabbing lance was in readiness.

Fifty yards separated us from the shark when he suddenly moved out of the shadow and I saw that his fin was black. A ground shark, in all probability.

I had about made up my mind to try a cast on him when an exclamation from Pierre caused me to turn my head. Not thirty yards away and swimming towards us in the wake of our boat was a bigger shark.

A bow wave curled up over his nose and a good foot of his tail waved above the churned water. His high dorsal fin was red in the sunlight.

"Pierre," I said, "Put the boat around. This is the shark I want."

Pierre pulled hard on his right oar, and the light craft spun on its axis. I waited with harpoon poised. The shark came closer until I could see the shovel nose and the cold, expressionless eye. Plainly visible was a long, white jagged scar that ran from the base of his skull down over his shoulder. A good twelve feet in length, he swam with effortless ease.

As I raised my harpoon he veered away, and the distance was too great for accuracy. Pierre bent to the oars in pursuit.

We would gain upon him, and just as I would resolve to hurl the iron at his weaving, red body he would by a single sweep of his tail shoot forward many yards.

A quarter of a mile away and directly in our course, some coral bars formed an angle.

Perhaps, I thought, we might corner him there. We drove steadily on, the shark leading, his fin and part of his back exposed. He entered the angle made by the bars, realized his predicament and turned. He had to pass us, and as he swept by I threw the harpoon. It struck him fair, just back of the dorsal fin.

The shaft fell away while the line smoked from the tub. I yelled at Pierre

to turn the boat about and as the big fish slackened speed I took a turn with the line. It tightened with a terrific jerk and we started across the flats in a smother of spray.

THE shark was heading for deep water, which did not meet with my approval, as I preferred fighting it out in the shoal waters of the flats. Just as he reached the channel which would carry him to the outer reefs and eventually the sea, he surprised us by describing a long curve. The slackened line cut the wind ripples in little showers of spray. Then I saw that he had again turned and was coming for the boat. I had given the automatic to Pierre and had told him to use it, should we come to close grips. I seized the stabbing lance in preference to the revolver in my belt.

I have seen the snarling of a maddened mountain lion, the rage of a trapped wolf, and the red eyes and foam-flecked muzzle of an enraged bull, but add to these as another impressive sight the cold, expressionless fury of a charging shark. The sinister nose, beneath which lie rows of murderous teeth, the naked eyes and the impression of strength and force compels one to regard him with feelings of respect if not actual fear. This feeling is emphasized when your fortress consists of but a light cedar boat with its gunwale only eight inches above the water.

As he approached our boat, the water swirled out from the sweep of his tail in miniature whirlpools. Pierre balanced on one knee, took quick aim and fired three shots, which glanced harmlessly from the surface. I leveled my lance and drove it at the brute's head. The keen blade ripped a furrow in the red skin and then the point stuck. In a second the lance was torn from my grasp and a sharp pain shot up my arm from a dislocated wrist. Then the shark was on us. There was a terrific impact, from which the boat careened far over and all but capsized. The shark clamped his great jaws on the soft cedar and splinters floated on the water.

Pierre leaned over and shot his remaining cartridges into the lashing body, but they had no appreciable effect. I jerked out my own gun; aiming with my left hand, I tried to bring the sights on the flat head. Twice I shot and then the shark, loosening his hold, tore away. The rope again tightened and we were speeding back across the flats. The lance was lost behind us somewhere. I looked to see whether there was any blood in the fish's wake but failed to observe any discoloration.

The loss of the lance was a serious handicap. The force of bullets is spent in anything over six inches of water. But we still had another harpoon.

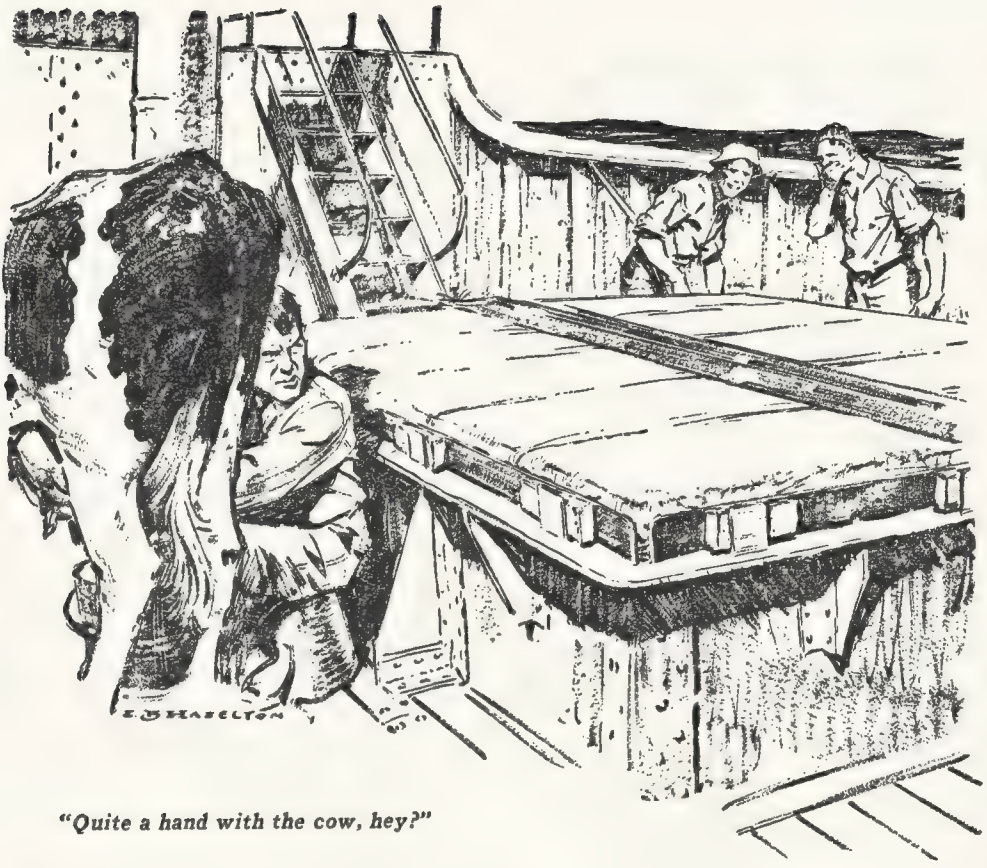
Suddenly the shark turned again and came charging back. It was apparent that he would pass us about ten or twelve feet off our starboard. I took up the second harpoon and braced myself for the cast. The long, red body came swiftly on and I saw distinctly the harpoon head imbedded in his back. I threw ahead of him but missed.

"By Gar, m'sieu, I keel him!" And Pierre leveled the automatic, whose clip he had refilled. The first bullet was high, the second struck the shark in the vicinity of the head and the third severed the harpoon line as if it had been cut with a knife.

The rope slackened and lay in the wash of the wake, while the wounded shark tore seaward, bearing in his back the head of our harpoon as a reminder of our association. Pierre looked at the blood on his fingers and smiled.

"Nevair mind, *m'sieu.* Nex' time we keel him."

But I felt somehow that there wouldn't be a next time. The reign of that shark was ended. He wasn't seen again.



"Quite a hand with the cow, hey?"

THE CHIEF OFFICER'S COW

By Richard Howells Watkins

ONLY one hatch of the freighter *Sabella* was still working cargo at the Brooklyn pier when the man from the office asked about the ship's grounding on her previous voyage.

Captain Brock Corliss was startled and annoyed at the recurrence of the topic. John Paulsen, the mate, could tell that by the way the brisk young shipmaster stiffened his lean figure, thinned his lips and fiddled with the four stripes of gold lace on his sleeve. His notation in the log book had been a masterpiece of the concise.

Behind the blank stone bastion of his weathered face, Mr. Paulsen listened, not without hope of honorable mention.

Despite his annoyance Captain Corliss did not break the easy flow of his conversation.

"That!" he said, almost dropping the subject over the side with a casual wave of his arm. "It didn't amount to much. Y'know, leaving the Venezuelan coast we pass between Los Roques, a group of low cays and Orchilla island. And when Los Roques light is out and the south equatorial current happens for no good reason at all to speed up to three knots when you're allowing for two knots—"

He shrugged his shoulders gracefully.

"I don't mind telling you, Mr. Rob-

erts," he confided, as to one intelligent enough to grasp things quickly, "it takes seamanship in those waters to keep the coral out of your bottom. But I've been fortunate."

Modestly he cleared his throat. His alert, roving eyes fell upon John Paulsen, who was watching the lowering of the steel cover of Number 2 hatch.

"Mr. Paulsen, there, got excited about it," he added humorously and his infectious smile drew an answering grin from Mr. Roberts, who was a very junior partner in the firm of Roberts and Sarasola. "Quite excited, but it was all over in no time."

The back of Mr. Paulsen's chunky brown neck took on a dullish red hue and his light blue eyes showed a glint of ice in them. It had not been he who had been excited about that grounding.

Paulsen's blunt face did not tauten or relax a muscle. He did not attempt to speak. Of course Corliss wouldn't want to dwell on the grounding; that was natural, but—Fervently Mr. Paulsen wished he had some of Captain Corliss's talent for soaping the office.

"Just a touch and I got her clear without as much as scraping the grass off her plates," the young shipmaster concluded. "The hydrographic office will be delighted to receive my correction of their chart."

The captain's eyes rested for an instant somewhat uneasily upon his first officer's motionless countenance and then turned aft.

"Mr. Paulsen!" he said hastily. "There appears to be a cow coming aboard who may require your personal attention. An indubitable cow! I hope you haven't forgotten too much about your Minnesota farmboy days to make her comfortable. I'm no hand at cows myself. A great advantage, Mr. Roberts, to have a qualified agriculturist aboard."

Mr. Roberts guffawed agreement.

"Aye, sir," John Paulsen rumbled. He dropped his powerful body down the ladder to the well deck and swung through the port alleyway. Though the essential John Paulsen was well hidden behind the granite face, the back of his neck was still burning more redly than ever the Caribbean sun had burned it.

"Serves me right, I suppose," he muttered. With the loading about over, he had been waiting around purposely under the bridge. Vividly he remembered how pale and fine-drawn Captain Corliss's keen face had been when at last there had been water under his ship's bottom again. He had shaken hands, damned the line for keeping a man of Mr. Paulsen's talent without a command and promised to do all he could for the mate at the New York office.

"You should be master of this ship," Corliss had told him. "I belong in the passenger service, of course."

And now Corliss called him a farmer for the amusement of a kid from the office!

IT HAD been no touch, that grounding. It was more like a salvage job. Getting her off had been a saga of sweat and seamanship, with Mr. Paulsen, mighty as a Norse god, doing great things with a bower anchor slung between two lifeboats, a wire to a coral head, snatch-blocks, tackles, chain and windlasses. And the crew, black men and white, black gang and deck, had been welded together into one fast working gang under Paulsen's leadership.

"I was no farm boy, then, by Peter!" he growled and came out on the after well deck in a burst of speed.

The cow, in her wooden stall, had been set down too hard on the steel deck by the winchman and the stall was in danger of disintegration. The scrawny brown and white cow, outraged beyond all consideration of her sex, was butting away like a goat at the wooden uprights.

The boatswain, a stringy, useful lad with knoblike wrists and enormous hands in which he grasped a hammer and a nail, was advancing and retreating like an agile dancer before the thrust of the angry horns.

"'Vast that!" Mr. Paulsen thundered. "This is no bull fight!"

He approached the cow, stood his ground and talked to her until her bovine nature reasserted itself. With a line he reinforced the shattered stall. He was still busy when the boss stevedore came to give him the final cargo papers and wish him luck. The stevedore was grinning broadly. Looking around, Mr. Paulsen saw the grin repeated on every grimy seaman's face.

"Quite a hand with the cows, hey?" the head steevie chuckled.

Mr. Paulsen breathed explosively through his teeth and the grins vanished. He awaited comments but none came.

"Where's this blasted hayburner going?" Mr. Paulsen demanded, far more noisily than usual. He darted a look at the Guernsey that plainly demonstrated to all watchers that he not only knew nothing of cows but didn't like them.

"La Guaira—on deck," the stevedore said.

"Pity they couldn't pick a ship equipped to carry cattle below," Mr. Paulsen commented. "A February passage out of New York is no time and place to carry an animal on deck."

The boss stevedore removed himself from the controversy with a shrug.

"On deck—not the line's responsibility," he reminded the chief officer. He grinned. "Maybe you have plenty a' fresh meat, huh?"

"That cow's cargo, and deck or not, nobody broaches cargo I'm signing for, mister," John Paulsen said stiffly.

From the bridge came a call. Mr. Paulsen blew his whistle.

"Stand by!" he barked. The men fled to their stations forward and aft. Mr. in time to see Mr. Roberts take leave of Captain Corliss and go ashore.

Up on the head Mr. Paulsen banished his hopes and heaved in his lines. With a tug nuzzling her bow the *Sabella* eased out into the stream. Once clear of the pier the bitter westerly wind got at her.

Paulsen, standing by the anchors on the long haul down the bay, kept his toes stamping and his hands thumping. The afternoon sun was powerless against that wind. When the pilot departed off Ambrose the mate went aft for a look at the stowage of the cargo gear. He was due to take over the bridge at four.

On the after well deck the cow peered mildly out of her stall at him. Mr. Paulsen frowned.

"Get a tarpaulin over that stall, bose," he told the boatswain. "The cargo manifest don't call for frozen beef. Break out some hay or cracked corn and try her with water. Wait!"

The boatswain halted in his tracks, big hands dangling. The mate had another look at the cow.

"Huh!" rumbled Mr. Paulsen. "Any of your crowd know how to milk, bose?"

"No, sir," said the boatswain quickly. "I been askin', sir."

Mr. Paulsen pondered. The ship carried no boys. The sweat of fear was freezing on the boatswain's forehead. He was a youngish fellow, was the bose, boatswain by name and not wages, trying hard to crawl up to the bridge through the hawse pipe. He had to maintain his shadowy authority as a salty seagoing man in the forecastle somehow. Right now he was staring fixedly at his knobby wrists, as if he had never noticed them before.

The mate glanced at the rest of the men on the well deck. There wasn't one he'd trust to milk anything but a whisky cask. Older men, mostly, bound to be A.B.'s till Doomsday and knowing and sometimes resenting the fact. Their wit in watches below might not be keen, but

shred the meat off a man's nerves long before the purple Venezuelan mountains hove up out of the blue sea to southward. No wonder the boatswain was sweating. He was a handy man, with the reputation of being willing to tackle anything.

"The cow's got to be milked," said Mr. Paulsen, more to himself than to the boatswain.

"I'm from Brooklyn, s-sir," muttered the boatswain.

"The cow certainly must be milked," said a smooth voice at the mate's elbow. Mr. Paulsen wheeled around, taken aback. He hadn't seen the master on the after well deck, save for inspection, since he had joined the ship.

"I can't have my rest disturbed by mooing cows, Mr. Paulsen," Captain Corliss stated flatly. "Neither can I have the steward's department fooling with cargo." His voice was loud enough to reach the boatswain. "Surely your long experience, both in the farmyard and in charge of all types of cargo, must indicate some solution of this problem?"

Mr. Paulsen looked toward the distant Jersey shore.

"Yes, sir," he answered steadily. "I'll milk her myself."

"Splendid!" said Captain Corliss. He laughed. "Splendid!"

He turned and walked forward through the starboard alleyway.

MR. PAULSEN, with a faint crease in his forehead, watched him go. He knew what had happened. That moment of unrestrained gratitude to which Captain Corliss had given way when the *Sabella* had come off the reef had bred a reaction. Mr. Paulsen had seen that sort of thing before. A man opened up to you in the emotion of a tense jam and said things that seemed to him on thinking them over later to reveal his own weakness. Now it was Captain Corliss Paulsen who was due for a long riding.

Slowly Mr. Paulsen turned around to meet the eyes of the men of the watch. Like the boatswain, he must hang onto his authority, just as a shark in a school must hang onto his health and agility if he wishes to remain uneaten. For the most part Mr. Paulsen's rude stone countenance gave him all the authority he needed. But once let an officer become a laughing stock and not granite face nor iron fists nor seamanship would save him—not with his captain deftly leading the laughter. Some of the men were grinning now.

"Get after that tarp and the hay, a couple of you!" he commanded, raising his voice.

When Mr. Paulsen's watch on the bridge ended at eight that night he tilted his cap at a truculent angle and walked aft with two buckets. Mr. Shaw, the second mate, a hater of monotony, who seemed to know all about it, followed him with subdued joy down to the well deck. A little cluster of men off duty was waiting in the lee of the house.

Mr. Paulsen ignored them. By the gleam of a solitary electric bulb he unlashed the tarpaulin, knocked a couple of slats off the stall with a chipping hammer, sat down on an up-ended bucket and got busy. No words from his audience reached his attentive ears above the moaning of the wind and the hiss of the milk in the pail.

Finished, he straightened up and beckoned to a mess attendant before he could duck into the alleyway.

"Take this milk to the steward," Mr. Paulsen commanded. Grimly he stalked toward the group, examined the faces of the men for symptoms of undutiful mirth and then looked up, toward the boat deck. The hard silver of the moon, sliding out of a puffy cumulus cloud, revealed suddenly the silhouette of Captain Corliss' head and shoulders on that high deck.

The captain, with a cigar in the leeward corner of his mouth, was there before him.

"The cow is milked, sir," the mate reported without shame.

"Fine!" said the shipmaster most amiably. "I doubt, Mr. Paulsen, whether your—ah—protegee"—the third mate, shaking, retired to the starboard wing of the bridge—"your protegee will survive the rigors of the passage."

"I'll get her through, sir," John Paulsen replied doggedly.

"That is your expert opinion?" The captain's voice conveyed no tangible mockery.

"We'll run out of this freezing weather when we hit the Stream," the mate said. "I'll take care of her."

"Um." Captain Corliss was thoughtful. "I hope you aren't going to revert to type, Mr. Paulsen. Ah—too great solicitude for her might not be good for discipline. After all, you are my chief mate."

"I was a good farmer ashore, sir, and at sea I try to be a good officer," said Mr. Paulsen. "When discipline fails in this ship I hope you'll let me know."

"I will; I will." The shipmaster was quite positive. "Ah—the office seemed unduly inquisitive about our little misadventure of last voyage, Mr. Paulsen," he went on slowly. "I'm afraid someone may have quietly reported and magnified the incident for his own advantage."

So that was what Corliss suspected! This was bad. Paulsen kept his countenance dead.

"It wasn't a bright thing to do, Mr. Paulsen," the captain said between his teeth. "And so you'll discover."

"Anybody who says I did that is a liar, sir," John Paulsen stated crisply.

Captain Corliss' cigar glowed and dimmed twice.

"Too bad I'm not more gullible," the shipmaster remarked. "I'd like to be-

He jerked open the door of the wheelhouse, stepped over the weatherboard and rolled shut the door.

John Paulsen squared his shoulders and clattered down the bridge ladder. His wind-reddened face was a trifle more bleak as he turned in. Corliss could set him back ten years with the line, or even land him on the beach if he felt so disposed, and Paulsen had little doubt how Corliss was feeling.

"A man can't crawl, not for a command or a job or any other damn thing," the mate told himself.

CAPTAIN CORLISS bore down hard on the cow situation. A chief mate milking a cow was news on any sea. Subtly, without loss of his own dignity or authority, the shipmaster stressed the humor of it. Mr. Paulsen, with the work of the ship, the discipline of the crew and eight hours bridge watch out of the twenty-four on his shoulders, was in no soft spot at best. As the ship cut across the Gulf Stream and slogged southward into better weather, the shipmaster's remarks about dairymaids grew more pointed and his encouragement of similar efforts of the junior mates, the radio operator and the engineers grew more pronounced.

Mr. Paulsen, at sea in a world of derision, stood by the cow and presented a granite face to his men.

"I'd like to see Corliss put this old wagon on the ground again," he whispered to himself, as he tramped the bridge and watched the sun come flaming up over the horizon. "I'd—"

He shut his jaws.

"Hell, I'd get her off for him again," he admitted despondently. "And he knows it, too."

Nevertheless he felt a sea disaster would do much to restore the spirit of the man behind that craggy and emotionless front of his.

than watch the milking from afar and spring their jests at an even greater distance. The boatswain was still pathetically grateful. Though Mr. Paulsen's hands were held in chancery both by law and the constant watchfulness of the master, the boatswain contrived to get in several socks with his bony fists where they were most likely to dry up the well springs of forecastle ridicule. Unmoved, stony, Mr. Paulsen had the tarpaulin cover taken off the stall two days out, sunned the cow for a day and then rigged an awning over her as the sun struck savagely at the steel deck.

Into flying fish weather and the brief showers that whirl after each other over the deep north of Porto Rico the ship ploughed placidly. She dropped her hook one quiet morning in the rocky bowl of St. Thomas harbor. Here Mr. Paulsen got rid of a few tons of flour, machinery and cars for the Virgins but the cow stayed around his neck.

The northeast trade wind piped up with sudden strength as they left the harbor. From about force four it ran up quickly to a good force seven. And then, in the rippling Caribbean, where the pilot chart indicates not one hour of bad weather in the hundred, the blue waves piled themselves up into seas and the seas humped themselves up into combers and curlers that threw the *Sabella* around and caused Captain Corliss, after an incredulous glance at the calendar, to inquire by radio if anything in the hurricane line was making up.

But it was no hurricane. The wind veered to eastward and blew harder yet, rolling up hissing seas that exploded on the beam of the laden freighter and flung most of her crew out of their bunks. By midnight it was a fresh gale and by eight bells in Mr. Shaw's graveyard watch it was a strong gale, with every indication of becoming a whole gale before dawn.

Mr. Paulsen, staggering up the leeward ladder of the bridge to take over from Shaw at four A.M., was struggling with half closed eyes and a brain that would not fully waken. He realized, as he scrawled his initials in the night order book in the wheelhouse and stumbled out onto the bridge, that she was making fairly heavy weather of it.

"South six degrees West," bawled Mr. Shaw and showed his tonsils in a cavernous yawn. "Rolling like a pig, steering like a barrel and taking it solid on the for'ard well deck."

"South, six West," repeated Mr. Paulsen.

One of the watch at the foot of the ladder bawled up at them.

"Cow—gone adrift," the mate made out.

"Watch her, will you?" John Paulsen growled, meaning the ship. He clattered down to the saloon deck and waved an arm at the two men of the watch standing by there. "Come on!" he bawled.

HE led them aft. The wind was moving so fast that though it was a warm wind it carried away his body heat and chilled him. He stopped at the top of the ladder that descended to the after well deck. The ship had just taken the top of a curler and the deck below was full of leaping, swirling water almost to the bulwarks. Pieces of wood from the cow's stall, a bale of hay, tarpaulins torn from the two cars lashed on the steel hatch and other bits of debris showed briefly in the riotous water. The cow, still in what was left of the stall, was jammed against the lee rail.

The ship, shuddering, rolled most of the water off her deck. A couple more like that and the sea would have the cow.

Mr. Paulsen damned the sea and the cow in the same breath. If the cow got much more kicking around like that, the sea would be welcome to what was left of her.

He looked over his shoulder at the two men. One of them was the boatswain.

He looked down at the well deck and saw that the life line strung across the deck between the foot of the ladder and the poop deck aft had parted, probably when the stall lurched to leeward. But a good half of it was still made fast to the ladder on which he stood.

John Paulsen glanced to windward. There was a big, shiny Caribbean moon behind the flying scud and shredded trade clouds and it lightened up the welter of water so that he could get some warning if a towering big one loomed alongside.

Mr. Paulsen spat into the sea. A marine disaster was what he had yearned for to test his mettle and to show this joker with the four stripes on his sleeve. And all he had in prospect was a waltz with a cow on a reeling, flooding well deck. The tough part of it was that if he did go over side during the exploit his passing would be regarded rightly enough as comic by the whole damned, light-minded merchant service.

But the cow was cargo, wasn't she? Mr. Paulsen spat again into the sea.

"Back me up, if you can," he bawled at his men. "Watch yourself—and don't let go o' the ladder."

He looked to windward and descended to the well deck. He gripped the broken life line and ran to the wreckage of the stall in which the cow was now plunging wildly. With mighty muscles bunching, he tore away a broken slat on which the cow was attempting to impale herself and dodged in time to prevent the cow from hooking him. Her blind lunges and a couple of shoves from him got her clear of the stall. He threw a bowline around her horns—almost—and then the top of an unseen sea, crashing over the weather bulwarks, came down blackly on him. It flattened him against the cow and the cow against the rail. Water roared over and under him, pounding him into the cow's ribs. Her legs flogged him.

There was a freeing port, studded with bars, in the bulwarks. The water, sucking out through that, jammed cow and man against it. Only this hindered the water rushing over the bulwarks from dragging them into the sea. Their fate was highly uncertain for a dirty moment.

Mr. Paulsen let go the cow and gripped the line with as much tensity as if it might be really useful to him if he were swept over side. When the blackness and the pressure began to pass he felt for the cow's head. This time he got a bowline around the horns and tried to haul her toward the ladder.

"Heave!" he roared over his shoulder at the men of the watch and he felt a strain come on the line. "Heave!"

THE ladder showed up close to Mr. Paulsen's bent, struggling figure. Then another sea, an ugly hollow black against the lighter sky and water, came toppling inboard and Mr. Paulsen and the cow were engulfed in water again. The line he clutched became taut as iron. The men at the ladder had taken a turn around something. Then, sickeningly, the line went limp in Paulsen's fingers. It had parted. The triumphant water swept them against the leeward bulwark again.

It was well that the line had held as long as it had. The bulk of the rushing water had already gone over; the ship was raising her leeward rail before they hit it.

The cow asserted herself in a series of bucks and lunges in the shoaling water. Mr. Paulsen, grabbing at her head, was carried along. Her erratic course brought her abruptly to a halt against the steel wall of the house almost under the ladder.

John Paulsen was tired; the shock made him more tired. His clothes bound him with heavy bonds. He sagged to his knees.

He caught a glimpse of the boat-

swain's stringy figure silhouetted against the grayness, in a position of taut intention at the foot of the ladder.

"Go back!" Paulsen roared, struggling up to his feet. "Get a line!"

The boatswain jumped up the ladder. The mate's eyes darted apprehensively to windward to see if the next smash was already coming. And then, of a sudden, he swung his body about and reached for a projection on the steel wall against which he had been flung. A door handle. As simple as that!

The handle turned. He jerked open the thick iron door and from that grey wet limbo outside stared into a prosaic, smelly, dimly lit corridor of the ship. Knee-high water gushed over the weather sill.

Frantically, with fists and boots, Mr. Paulsen propelled the cow toward that opening. It was remarkable how quickly the cow got the idea. She lumbered in over the high sill. Mr. Paulsen floundered after her. Something thundered behind him; he jammed shut the door as more water started spurting in.

The chief engineer relaxed the bracing of legs and elbows and sat bolt upright in his bunk. His eyes were like knobs as he stared at the cow in the passage outside his open door.

"You can't bring that blasted cow in here!" he blared and the third engineer stuck his head out, too, and was utterly horrified at this lawless profanation of engineering quarters by the deck.

Mr. Paulsen let go his breath—all of it—through his teeth in a rush like escaping steam. He dogged down the door behind him and then pointed at the cow.

"Cargo!" he croaked triumphantly. "Cargo!"

That shut them up—somewhat—for cargo outranks deck and black gang.

Minutes later Captain Corliss, slippers hissing on the stairs, came down to take a grave view of the situation.

"You'll find yourself in the logbook for this, Mr. Paulsen, and probably on the beach when I report it to our Venezuelan director, as I must," he declared.

He shook his head indignantly. "You took over the bridge from Mr. Shaw and then went wandering off with the ship laboring in a sea to fool around with this damned animal. Lack of judgment, Mr. Paulsen, serious lack of judgment. A mangy cow! I'd sooner have her over the side than defiling my decks, anyhow!"

It is the theory of the law and the owners that no officer ever leaves the bridge during his watch. Though the theory sounds all right ashore, it cannot be obeyed at sea. Nevertheless Captain Corliss had Mr. Paulsen exactly where he seemed to want to have him.

Mr. Paulsen presented his most hard-boiled lack of expression to the slit-eyed shipmaster and went back to the bridge. Before seven bells the wind was down to a leisurely force four and at noon the entire indignant engineering department turned the cow around in the narrow passage after some difficulty and ejected her onto a well deck now only occasionally drenched by a rattle of spray. No marine disaster to try a man or save his berth came up over the horizon to succor Mr. Paulsen as the ship ground on across the calming Caribbean.

THE three berths alongside the breakwater at La Guaira were occupied by ships discharging cargo when the *Sabella* let go her anchor in eight fathoms. Though there was no great need for haste, Senor Juan Sarasola, the important Venezuelan director of Roberts & Sarasola, almost shouldered the departing port doctor off the ladder as he came aboard. He was followed by two other Venezuelan gentlemen. He grasped Captain Corliss' hand with more urgency and less politeness than was his punctilious custom.

"We had a bit of a blow, sir, but we

weathered it in great shape," Captain Corliss, a little puzzled at this solicitude, reassured him with quick understanding.

Senor Sarasola grasped his arm.

"The cow!" he said. "You have the cow? The cow came through all right? It is important!"

"The cow," repeated Captain Corliss.

"*La vaca!*" chorused the Venezuelan visitors.

The captain's eyes flicked to Mr. Paulsen, woodenly standing by for orders and then back to the animated, indeed agitated face of the Venezuelan partner.

"The cow," Corliss murmured and smiled brightly. Mr. Paulsen could almost feel his commander's nimble brain working. "Yes, Mr. Sarasola, we—I got the cow through, of course, in spite of continuous bad weather."

"Ah!"

"I won't say she didn't need a bit of looking after, but you know how I take care of my cargo, sir," the master explained confidentially. "On deck or in the hold, I watch it, sir. You know."

Senor Sarasola responded to the shipmaster's smile brilliantly. "I do, I do," he assured Corliss and spoke rapidly in Spanish to the two accompanying him. They, too, brightened up.

Captain Corliss turned to the mate.

"Give her some more chain, Mr. Paulsen," he commanded brusquely. "Go forward and see to it yourself."

Sadly Mr. Paulsen turned to obey. A fast man on the tongue was Captain Brock Corliss.

"Wait!" said Senor Sarasola, gesturing to the mate. "This is important. The cow, Captain, was a test. We are not equipped, as you know, to carry cattle in any quantity below decks. But these two gentlemen, the greatest landowners, though their land is not so good, have the need of cows from the drought area, able to live through the dry season on the parched mountain lands."

He laughed hurriedly. "They make a test, unknown to me, unknown to New York. They are my good friends, but they made a test. They wish to see if Roberts & Sarasola can transport the cattle or if they must go elsewhere. And you have won that test, captain!"

He laid a hand on Captain Corliss' shoulder. "You have my great confidence, Captain," he said. "I know you —how well you have cared for this cow. Look!"

He indicated one of the three ships alongside the breakwater, a rather scrubby little vessel of somewhat less tonnage than the *Sabella*.

"We have it all arranged to buy her at a—a fair figure," he said. "She is practically ready to leave. You will take command today, Captain, and you will bring back in her wheat and flour, much wheat and flour and cattle—on deck—lots of cattle—with that great care for which you know you so well."

"A c-cattle boat!" muttered Captain Corliss. He plucked feverishly at his four stripes. "You want me—a cattle—"

"It is important!" said Senor Sarasola. "It is a new line of business. Roberts & Sarasola trust you, captain. Pack up at once! The mate here"—he smiled in kindly but rather perfunctory fashion at Mr. Paulsen—"will take over command of this ship. I am sure you have instructed him well enough in the time he has served under you. At once, Captain!"

There was a ring of impatience in his voice.

Captain Corliss responded. His eyes whipped toward his mate. But, as Mr. Paulsen knew well, the only complaint Corliss had handy was that the mate had been over solicitous about that accursed cow.

The granite countenance of Mr. Paulsen quivered on the verge of a wide curving split. Then, abruptly, it hardened and Mr. Paulsen presented to his ex-captain and the world the grave, strong countenance of one in command.

PIZENOUS WINDIES

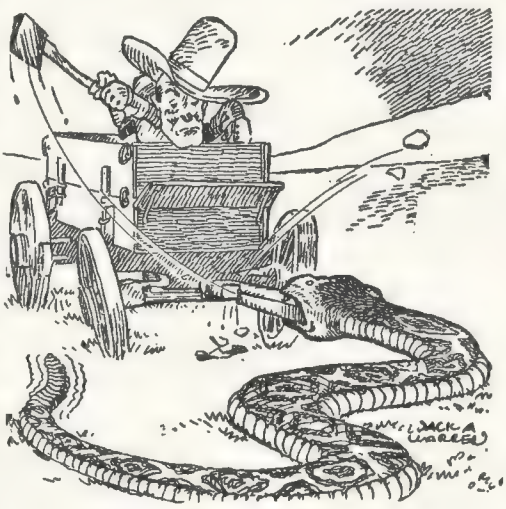
By MODY C. BOATRIGHT

from "Tall Tales from Texas Cow Camps."

THE fire had died to a bed of coals. It was no longer possible to see the night herders, but the indistinct songs reached the camp. Lanky was seated on his bed-roll. The sitters had dwindled to four, and the talk had been about rattlesnakes.

"I didn't know they were that bad," observed Lanky.

"That bad!" said Joe Martin. Joe was a veteran of the open range and of the overland trail. Far and near he was known by the name of "Windy Joe," but Lanky had not learned of this last fact.



"I knowed it had to be done. . . ."

"That bad!" said Joe again. "Them snakes that Red and Hank told you about must of been baby snakes. They couldn't of been real, he-men, venomous reptiles like the one that killed Ike Morgan. Ike was one of the best friends I ever had in this world. He worked on the Yellow House when Red and Hank here was wearin' foldin' britches.

"Ike was some cowhand, even if he did have a wooden leg. I reckon I might as well tell you how he got his wooden leg, while I'm about it. You see it was like this. Ike was ridin' the range one winter day, and as he started up a little canyon, his hoss fell and caught Ike's leg. The critter broke two of his own legs in the fall, and there he was on Ike's leg and couldn't get up. And there was pore Ike wonderin' if he'd starve before anybody found him.

"Purty soon Ike smelled a norther, and the next thing he knowed, the norther was there, and the next thing he knowed after that, he had icicles on his nose. Ike knowed he'd freeze to death, and that *muy pronto* if he didn't find some way to git loose. He figgered and figgered. That was one thing about Ike, he always used his head. Well, he figgered and figgered, and purty soon he looked around, and he seen an axe about a hundred yards off. He 'lowed some nester had been haulin' wood out of the canyon and had lost his axe. And mighty glad Ike was of the nester's hard luck, too. And jest to show you the nerve of the man, he goes over and gits the axe and chops off his own leg, and he didn't have any chloroform, either, it not bein' wormy season, and gits his self loose and walks ten miles into headquarters. That's what I call nerve.

"But what I started out to tell you was how Ike met his death. The boss sent Ike to town and had the blacksmith make him a peg-leg. A fine limb it was, too. Ike had him a stirrup made to fit it, and he could ride as good as ever. Many a bronc he peeled after that. He could dance like a fool, and hold his own in any shootin' match that any tough *hombre* ever started. Shame it was that he had to be kilt by a dirty reptile.

"Ike was fixin' fence in the canyon one

evenin' jest at dusk. He needs a stay for the fence, and he looks over in the bushes and sees what in the dusk of the evenin' looks like a pole. He gits down to pick it up, and damn me, if it wasn't one of them low-down reptiles—a big specimen with twenty-eight rattles and a button. And the son-of-a-gun nabs Ike by the wooden leg. That don't worry Ike much, and while the critter holds him by the peg, Ike takes out his six-shooter and sends the gentleman on to his happy huntin' ground, cuttin' off the twenty-eight rattles and the button for a keepsake—which I now have and will show you some time if you'll make me think of it.

"Ike gits on his hoss and rides to the bunkhouse where me and Ezra Jenkins are, and when he tries to lift his wooden leg out of the stirrup, it won't come. Ezra and me gits the axe and the cold-chisel and cuts off the stirrup from around the peg and brings Ike in the house. By that time the leg is as big as a steer, and it is all we can do to carry him in. Ezra gits his fencing hatchet and me the choppin' axe, and we begins to try to reduce Ike's leg to its natural and proper size. We trims and we trims, and the leg swells and swells. And the more we trims, the more it swells. However, for the first ten hours we gains on the swellin', but we begins to tire and there's nobody to spell us. I takes the axe and keeps Ezra busy packing out the chips and splinters. We works all night choppin' and trimmin' and packing out, but we gits weaker and weaker, and the swellin' keeps gainin' on us. Finally, after three days, we jest naturally gives tetotally out, and has to set down and see pore Ike die."

"But," said Lanky, "a bite on the wooden leg shouldn't have given him any pain. How did it kill him?"

"Well, you see it was like this," replied Joe. "His leg jest swelled and swelled till it got so big it jest naturally smothered him to death. Fine feller he was too, one of the best friends I ever had in this world."

"There was jest one good thing about it," added Joe. "Ezra and me had enough kindling wood to do us all winter."

Joe chunked up the fire and put on the coffee pot.

"Have a cigarette?" offered Lanky.

"Roll my own," said Joe, fishing out a shuck.

It was Hank's turn. "Too bad about Ike," he said. "But I don't doubt a-tall it's so, like you say, fer I seen a similar case. Very similar case, except it wasn't a man's leg.

"Me and Jim Arbury hitched up the hosses one mornin' and went out to bring in a little stove-wood. He headed out towards a little mesquite thicket, and jest before we got to it, I seen the lead hoss shy.

"What's the matter with old Pete?" I asks Jim.

" 'What's the matter with him?' Jim says. 'My God, man,' says he, 'look at that reptile! big as a fence post!'

"And shore nuff there's a great big rattler a-holt of the wagon tongue. He'd nabbed it, and he wouldn't let go.

"Jim knowed exactly what to do. He jumped down and pulled out the couplin' pin, lettin' the double-tree go, and drove the team out of the way. 'Grab the axe,' he says. Well, I jumped out with the axe and begun work. I shore hated to do it, but I knowed it had to be done. I had to chop off the wagon tongue, and be damn quick about it too, to save the wagon."

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where readers, writers and adventurers meet

"NO QUARTER" is the first work of Maurice Walsh to appear in our magazine. Many of the comrades may have read elsewhere some of his stories and books, particularly his fine yarns of the Black Watch.

Maurice Walsh has a swing and flavor in his writing that is to our liking completely. I suspect that after "No Quarter" appears later as a book we'll go out and buy it for the home shelves, to have it handy for a couple of more readings.

He sends us this thumbnail sketch:

Born April 21st, 1879—Kerry, Ireland.

Well known in Scots Highlands—Forres, Inverness, Banff, etc.

"The Walshes of the slender ships" were pretty tough pirates and freebooters about the time of Queen Elizabeth. I am descended from one of them who had a good time until he was hanged—deservedly.

National, secondary and technical school in Kerry.

Wrote for Irish Journals as a boy. "The Weekly Freeman" used to give a weekly prize of 2 guineas for a short story and I used to win this when I was really needing a few shillings—but I was always lazy.

Married to Caroline Isobel Begg—who has red hair. I have three sons—Maurice, Ian and Neil—good men all.

Civil Servant to Irish Free State—on the Excise side.

I was a "moonlighter" as a young man, but that was the pirate blood.

Idiosyncrasies—Taking the opposite side.

Personal dislikes—The Bloody British Empire, which you must not confound with the tight little island of England.

Superstitions, if any—Oh, the usual, but I do hate turning back.

My Aim in Life—The absolutely simple life.

Clubs, etc.—Hermitage Golf Club, Dublin. C. & E. Club.

Hobbies—Fishing, gardening in a small way.

Favorite Book and why—"West is West" and all other stories by Eugene Manlove Rhodes, because he writes true romance, which is the ideal made real not the real made ideal.

Favorite sports—Fishing again, hurling and football once.

How I happened to write any book—To pass the time and create a yarn for those kids of mine, who are my hardest critics.

I think I like the novels of Neil M. Gunn, the youngest Scot novelist, as well as those of Gene Rhodes. He and I have fished and sported nefariously over Scotland.

NEW also to our Writers' Brigade is Bertrand L. Shurtleff, with his old soak character Old Gus. Shurtleff is undoubtedly the strongest fellow in the business of pecking at a typewriter. An editorial associate of ours went to college with Shurtleff, who also is one of the huskiest men who ever stepped on to a football field or into a wrestling ring. Even at that time the writing instinct was asserting itself—along with throwing two-hundred pounders around, this chap was writing poetry!

Here's his account of himself:

The son of a world wanderer who was born in a covered wagon before the West was settled and who sailed the seven seas on wind-jammers, I have always had the lust for adventure in my blood. On my mother's side my people were slavers early in the history of the Rhode Island colony and the triangle trade, then whalers. My grandfather was a mate and his brother captain of more than one New Bedford sperm hunter. The other grandfather was a circuit preacher for the Methodist church, being one of the first into Wisconsin and traveling for a while with John Brown in Kansas.

The sea has always attracted me as the last frontier of the red blooded. Born in the shadow of New Bedford and bred among old ex-whalers and their traditions, I early learned the "stick and string" of every kind of sailing craft. But, being bitten with the urge to write, I put myself through East Greenwich Academy and Brown University as a preparation. During that time I sneaked away to sea in the summer vacation, after having done time as a first class seaman in the U. S. N. R. F. during the European War.

At Brown I played four years of football, as they had no freshman rule in those days, and wrestled for four years. Then, after graduation, I played seven years of professional football, coached eight seasons, taught English, and started raising a family. The most exciting thing I have done of recent years was to get a movie test as a candidate to replace Louis Wolheim (being of his class of beauty). In fact, you may all see me yet on the screen, for I still have ambitions. It has taken me some twenty years to appear in *Adventure*, but I have finally made the grade. BERT SHURTLEFF

"MUCHO FANDANGO" concerns some historical matters that aren't prominent in school text books, though apparently as much a part of warfare as the usual cooties. H. Bedford-Jones says:

The old notions about our heroes in blue are swell in the Old Ladies' Home but not so hot in point of fact; soldiers always did drink and always will. I have the diary of a private in Jeff Davis' company who stopped a bullet at Monterey, and it's a scandalous joy to read.

The deserters who formed the fighting San Patricio battalion in the Mexican army were largely foreign-born enlisted men, lured out of the U. S. army by Mexican propaganda. Also, resentment of harsh discipline entered into the matter; and there were the usual blacklegs.

A part of the battalion was captured at Churubusco by General Scott, and very fairly tried. Sixteen were hanged, the others were released. Among the prisoners was Captain Tom Riley. Since he had deserted on the Rio Grande border before war had actually commenced, he was merely branded with the blue D on the cheek, and turned loose.

C. BLACKBURN MILLER, more widely known as Kit Miller, is president of the Salt Water Anglers of America, an extremely active worker in game and fish conservation, author of several books and many articles in outdoor magazines.

We print his fact story of a shark—a red shark—in this issue. Kit Miller has gone to considerable trouble in inquiries at museums and government agencies to find out exactly what kind of shark it was, and still isn't sure.

Fish stories always seem to be under some suspicion. Mr. Miller is the head of what he claims is as honest a group of men as can be assembled anywhere in the United States. But I gave him a pencil and asked him to go over his manuscript and remove every single word or item of it that wasn't exactly true, that had not happened in exactly the way it was described.

"But that's the way it *did* happen," he said.

"I don't doubt it," I said. "But here's the pencil."

He went over the manuscript word by word, and returned the pencil. I noticed then that the pencil had no point, but Kit Miller hadn't noticed it because he hadn't seen any occasion to use it.

"Damn it," he said, glaring as a man has a right to glare, "that's what happened and that's the way it happened."

So that point is clear. I know how he felt. A big fish I never saw pulled me down a railroad embankment at Tavernier Creek one dark night and left me standing knee-deep, and the hook was pulled out as straight as an ice pick. People look dubious, however.

Mr. Miller says, on his favorite subject:

Fishing as a hobby is not an original one—it dates back many centuries. Saint Peter was an angler, though star drags and multiplying reels were unknown in biblical times nor did the question of sport enter into the game as it does today.

I, too, have angled in that historic pond known as the Sea of Galilee and drew up fishes as did Peter, though the size of my catch occasioned me but little awe.

I have been asked, what was the attraction that led me to circumvent the globe, fish rod in hand? I was accentuated by both curiosity and a love of the sport. I wanted to study the strange fish that inhabited those far-off, little known waters and desired to compare their fighting ability with the game fish of America.

Granted that there is no greater thrill than the nerve-jarring strike of a heavy fish, nor music sweeter than the hysterical scream of a racing reel, nor any situation quite so tense as when you are down to your last ten yards of line, yet this is not all. There are other factors that contribute to an even greater extent. The charm of environment where blue skies sweep down in a distant arc to meet the far horizon of a bluer sea, the white flash of a gull's wing and the song of the sea wind in the rigging. There is ever the sense of a deep mysticism lying fathoms deep beneath your keel. The uncertainty of what darksome shape will surge suddenly to the surface to attack your dancing lure. The appearance of a long sinuous body, leaping its length and glistening with purple and silver in the sunlight, before it falls back in the white foam of an engulfing wave. The fierce joy of the ensuing battle in which your sole chance of victory lies in a pliant rod and a thin section of linen line.

I think that it is that strange sense of mystery as to what swims in the depths that has held me spell-bound ever since, as a boy, I fished with my cheap rod and can of worms, in the deep, foam-flecked pool whose current flowed sluggishly past the ruined mill.

And now as I look back over the trail of years and can testify that I have taken, at one time or another, nearly all the game fish known to man, I realize that my hobby has never palled and that I am as keen in its pursuit as when I was a kid angling for catfish and an occasional bass in the mill pool.

There will come a time when the line of Life frays and the reel brake wears beyond repair. I will then have no regrets, but can realize and be thankful for myriad hours of enjoyment spent in the pursuit of my hobby—just fishing.

TRACY RICHARDSON'S yarn of the American Legion in the Canadian Army has hit home to several comrades who were in that wild outfit which later left so many of its members dead in France. Ex-Corporal Paddy McCann, Second Platoon, A. Company, 97th Battalion, C.E.F., wrote us first, followed with another letter in a few hours, and had such a good time doing it that he forgot to put his address on either letter. Says Ex-Corporal McCann:

I have just finished reading Tracy Richardson's description of the 97th Battalion, and while very interesting, Tracy, for some reason or other, hasn't told the half of it. Perhaps it is because Tracy, being an officer, hadn't the opportunity to view things from the enlisted man's standpoint or else he has forgotten many of the interesting happenings that that outfit took in its stride as it went along. And let me tell everyone who might read this that Mr. Richardson is eminently correct when he tells the world that the 97th was rough, tough, and sassy to an extreme. I was in it. I know.

I believe Tracy is wrong when he states that Duke Harding was the first to be enlisted, for unless my memory fails me, the

Duke came along with Rasmussen in a draft from Lord Strathcona's Horse from out Calgary way. I crossed the International bridge at Niagara Falls, October 29, 1915, was examined and accepted and sent to Welland. I was examined again the next day and upon declaring myself to be an American citizen was sent to the Exhibition Camp at Toronto, where I reported to Major Clark in the Live Stock Building. There were eight of us, Kentucky Morgan, Clark, the bugler, Harry Vincent who came from Syracuse, Slim Thompson, Anglemeyer an ex-circus hand from Binghampton, little Paddy McNeer, who I think was in Tracy's machine gun section afterward, Whitey McAdam and myself that formed the nucleus of that red hot outfit.

The officers came later. Most of the lieutenants came from other Canadian outfits or from the Provincial School of Instruction. Mason, MacCrae, and Lieb came together. Rasmussen came as a private but was soon commissioned as a captain and then as a major along with Mason, MacCrae and Guthrie. And in speaking of Major Mason, if by chance he should see this, let it be a reminder that he still owes me the ten bucks that he borrowed from me in the lavatory of the Lamb Hotel on Yonge Street.

There was Captain Hutt, the Quartermaster, Lieutenant Beadle, the Armorer, whose swan song, I believe, was a sock at the chaplain's chin. So it seems that even the officers had their Donnybrook fairs. Lieutenant Hoos, and the two Lieutenants Nelson, and my skipper Captain Manning, who was always good for a pass and a touch: I can picture him today when he first took command of "A" Company. It was a battalion drill, and as we debouched in columns of platoons, Manning who was green to Canadian commands and formations, said over his shoulder, "Never mind any blankety-blank command I give, do this thing right and I'll kiss every mother's son in the company." "A" company went through without a slip.

Tracy speaks of riots. I wonder if he remembers the time the battalion refused to fall in until the prisoners were released from the clink and the quality and quantity of grub was increased? Or the scrap with the 218th battalion at Aldershot, the aftermath to the contest, when Roddy MacDonald, the Halifax Terror, knocked out our own pride and joy, Cyclone Scott, erstwhile provost sergeant?

Or how we got Tom Longboat, the marathon runner, drinking and took him along with us when we entrained for Quebec? And how Longboat claimed he was kidnaped and when he pointed out the men who were responsible for the act, Captain Manning swore by all that was holy that the men pointed out were on a special detail at the company orderly room at the time Longboat said he was led astray?

This is the second letter I have written you in the space of a few hours. It is as Tracy rightly states; it was a tough outfit of ex's, if you understand what I mean. The majority were old timers, but there were a number of impressionable kids like myself, imbued with that spirit of adventure that comes once in every man's life. They came from here and there and everywhere. Nearly every state in the Union was represented in that outfit. There were lumberjacks from Michigan, Minnesota, and the Pacific Coast, coal miners from the Pennsylvania coal fields, hillbillies from Tennessee and soft drawled Southerners from Georgia and the Carolinas. We had sod busters and harvest hands from the plains states, Massachusetts mill hands, and stevedores from the Hudson River docks. To top it all, we had with us at least 150 men who sometime or other had been colonels under Porfirio Diaz, Huerta, or Navarrez down in Mexico. It seemed to me at that time, that the lowest rank in the Mexican army was that of captain. Taking them all in all they were a pretty good bunch, yet there were certain individuals who were characters unto themselves. Take Cunningham for instance. He was a sergeant in "B" company. A good soldier and the pleasantest man in the world, when he was sober, but let him get a couple under his belt and he was up to his neck in trouble. Still he always managed to crawl out with a minimum of damage to himself. I remember one particular instance as he was about to be brought before Colonel Jolly on a rather serious charge, he made a wise crack that Jolly could not fail to hear, and so touched his sense of humor that he let Cunningham off with a week's confinement to quarters. Cunningham had said to Sergeant Beauprie, the orderly sergeant,

"Tell me, Beauprie, what does that name of yours mean?"

Beauprie smiled. "I'll tell you, Cunny," he replied, "as near as I can figure out, it means 'beautiful prayer'."

"Beautiful prayer, eh! It might have been a beautiful prayer as far as your parents were concerned, but they got the wrong answer."

Jim Daniels was another. Jim had served in the Philippines and in the Boxer rebellion

in China. He used to tell of the looting of the palace at Pekin, how they took pot shots with their Krags at priceless porcelains, and the selling of some of the imperial collection of jades, worth thousands, for fifteen dollars Mex. Jim looked tough, talked tough, and believe you me, Jim was tough.

Parks was just the opposite. He had soldiered practically all his life, yet deplored the fact that he always found himself in a position where he was killing off his fellow humans. Parks' philosophy was to create rather than destroy. Give Parks a camera and a beautiful view and he was happy.

The esprit de corps was excellent. Tracy tells of the affair of the American flag at Aldershot Camp. Another incident in which Tracy's machine gun section played a leading part began over a baseball game, in which a team representing the 97th defeated a team from the 180th which was known as the Sportsman's battalion, because most of its personnel were current Canadian athletes. There was considerable rivalry between the two battalions and the result of the ball game gave rise to plenty of bad feeling. Little Paddy McNeer was carried into the barracks pretty well beaten up, supposedly by a group from the 180th. Then the fun began. Tracy's machine gunners to a man dashed from the barracks, pass or no pass, and commenced combing the streets of Toronto for members of the 180th. They went from hotel to hotel. The civil authorities were powerless to do anything about it. It was simply walk in, knock down, drag out and God help anyone that tried to interfere. The Mayor of Toronto called on General Campbell, the brigade commander, who in turn called on Colonel Jolly, who in turn called out the rest of the battalion to round up the machine gun section. Instead of rounding them up, they joined them. The upshot of the whole affair was that inside of a half hour the entire battalion was running amuck and for one solid week it owned the town.

I never had much personal contact with Tracy Richardson. The only time I came in contact with him was when I was orderly corporal or corporal of the guard, when he would be the orderly officer. I remember one occasion when someone was throwing a party to celebrate the wiping out of the battalion debt (I believe Tracy knows through whose good heartedness) there were seven different orderly officers in the space of four hours, and I think Lieutenant Richardson was one of them; but whether he or any of the others were aware of the fact that the entire guard were having a celebration of their own and the prisoners were doing the guard duty, they never let on. Richardson's men swore by but not at him, and to gain the confidence of his men in such a fashion is prima facia evidence that Tracy was the tops.

I have but to close my eyes and see them all as they were twenty-one years ago, the long swinging step of the route march with rifles on shoulders, heads erect, eyes flashing, and that proud bearing denoting conscious power, while from every throat comes the stirring tones and words of the song of the 97th:

> Ninety-Seventh, hats off to thee,
> To thy colors, true we shall ever be,
> Firm and strong, united are we,
> Ninety-Seventh leads the way
> Fighting on to win the day
> Hail, Ninety-Seventh, hail!

JAMES A. McGUIRE, of Tucson, Arizona, tosses in some more of the names and incidents of those days.

May I come within the glow of the campfire and add a bit concerning the American Legion and Lt. Tracy Richardson, 97th Bn., and former P.P.C.L.I.?

I am a native New Yorker, and on May 12, 1915, in Montreal, raised my hand to fight for His Majesty the King. A member of the 2nd University company, I transferred to the 1st U. C., and left Canada with them on May 28, 1915; joined the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry in the field July 28, 1915. I missed meeting T. Richardson, for he was struck off the strength of the battalion on June 1, 1915. However as I was assigned to the machine-gun section I heard about him from his pal, McKenzie, later to win a posthumous V.C. at Passchendaele, Sloane "Shorty" Bourne and one South African vet whose name escapes me. I became corporal in the 7th Brigade, T.M. Battery; became an infantry subaltern, Canadians, then an acting captain in the Tank Corps, B.E.F. I transferred to the A.E.F. after all that.

Richardson was an original member of the P.P.C.L.I., joining Sept., 1914, number 865, wounded May 4, 1915, S.O.S. (struck off strength), June 1, 1915, subsequently a Lieut. 97th Bn.

Here are my impressions about the American Legions formed in Canada, beginning with the 97th. I understood they were all U.S.'ers, from colonel to cook. On May 12th, before I was sworn in, Lieut., later Major, Currie, first had to wire Ottawa if it took the ban off Americans enlisting. It had, owing apparently to the feeling that the sinking

of the Lusitania would send sheafs of Yanks over the line. They guessed right; there were two other countrymen besides myself that day who were sworn in. Also about that time, rumor had it that our Colonel "Teddy" Roosevelt wished to lead a Division of Americans over with the Canadians! True or false, his son Kermit went into the British Army about that time. I understood the forming of those American Legions was conforming to his desires, but that dream was never fulfilled.

There was a Lieut. M. J. Robb, from the 212 Bn., also American Legion, who, I was informed by someone else, had won the Congressional Medal of Honor, out in the Islands, I think. He won the Military Cross with the Patricias.

The 97th was broken up and furnished replacements to the 7th Canadian Brigade, some to the Royal Canadian Regiment and other to the Princess Patricia. Some of the 212 were sent to the latter battalion, as Robb belonged to that mob.

DONALD M. McRAE, of Berry Creek, California, says on the same subject:

In the June issue there was an item in Camp-Fire quoting Tracy Richardson on the 97th American Legion Bn. in Canada.

I started out as a private in that outfit, got to be a major by the grace of Sir Sam Hughes and then resigned, going to England and finally joining the 1st Canadian Division in France.

I enjoyed Tracy's account a great deal and can heartily endorse his statements in regard to both the toughness and fighting quality of the men. I crossed the trails of several while in France. It's hard to find better soldiers than Major Alexander Rasmussen, Major Jack Manning, Lt. White—all killed on the job.

THE comrades will recall how they have twice scratched their heads over the problem of making life more beneficent and balmy for Phil Westhoff and a few chosen comrades in the South Seas.

We got our first letter from Phil Westhoff, located at Papeete, Tahiti, two years ago. He sounded querulous. Life out there ought to be perfect, he said, with their climate and sitting on the sand under the palms, but it wasn't perfect because he and his cronies couldn't keep their beer cold. He wanted to know how it could be done, without ice or the purchase of mechanical equipment.

A score of hard-working comrades took off their coats and sent along diagrams and descriptions of evaporation devices, and a year of silence went by.

Phil Westhoff wrote again then—the beer was fine and cold, but they had run out of jig-saw puzzles. They had done all theirs so many times they were tired of looking at the same pictures, and some of the pieces were lost, etc. Where could they get some more The comrades took that situation to heart, and so another year passed in silence.

Now we have this letter:

Gentlemen,

Hello, here I am again asking for information. Enclosed please find International reply coupon. It has been stamped. Thereby hangs a tale. Last August I sent a letter to Frisco asking for information. Eight months afterward the letter came back to me with the coupon. It had been opened in Frisco and stamped, no such party at this address. It went to Wellington, New Zealand, and finally came back to me. I think the coupon is still negotiable. Sometime ago I requested information from you how to keep my beer cold. That problem has been eliminated. I am still making it but in spite of the fact that I wait three weeks after it is bottled before drinking it, the damn stuff remains cloudy.

I will describe how I make it.

One jar English malt extract, about one quart. Eight ounces Tasmainian hops, boiled and steeped thoroughly. Three kilograms, 6.6 lbs of brown sugar. I make my own yeast of hop water, sugar and flour. This makes ten gallons. I let it work five days. Then bottle. Perhaps some of your readers can put me wise how to clear it.

That will be all for the present.

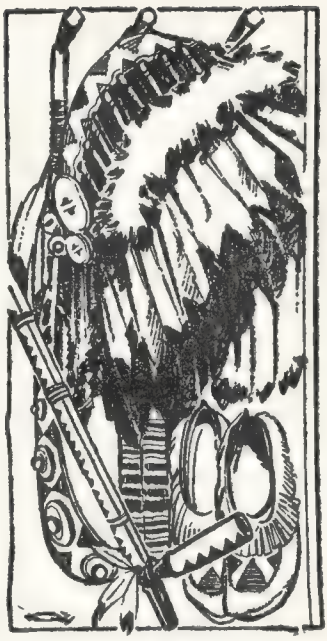
I remain sincerely,

Phil Westhoff.

Do any comrades want to encourage this making of ten gallons of beer at a clip, and do they know how to keep it from clouding? Send us the letters, and we'll get the international reply coupons. H. B.

Ask Adventure

information you can't get elsewhere



IT wasn't any good. They dumped it into the streets. It was only platinum.

Request:—Some years ago, gold miners in South America, annoyed at the quantities of a grayish metal in the ore, used it to counterfeit coins, giving them a thin gold wash. The metal was platinum. What coin was this? What year? Country? Where were they made? What inscription did the genuine coins carry? How much are the genuine worth?

The miners later burned their houses merely to reclaim the platinum dust. This is supposed to be a true story. Perhaps you haven't heard it, or heard of the coins; if not, could you tell me in what country in South America both gold and platinum are found, and what coin in circulation there would be the most likely victim?

—J. K. Bach, Louisville, Ky.

Reply by Mr. Howland Wood:—In reply to your letter concerning platinum, all I can say is this, that from the earliest times in certain parts of South America, especially in the region that is now Colombia, they were much bothered with a hard, white metal, either found separate in small grains or mixed with the gold and which they often had trouble in separating from the gold.

This metal was platinum and it was thrown out on the dumps as there was absolutely no use for it at the time and there was no method by which they could melt it.

The real knowledge of platinum does not seem to date back much before 1735, when one or two chemists in Europe began to separate it and experiment with it. It was not until a number of years later that they were able to find uses for it.

There were certain counterfeits of doubloons made of this metal towards the end of the XVIII Century. These pieces were then gilded and as the weight was nearly the same as that of gold, they were easily passable. I very much doubt that great quantities of these were made, on account of the difficulty of melting and fabrication. Around the middle of the last century many counterfeits of the gold one hundred *reales* pieces, bearing the head of Isabella II of Spain, were made. At that time platinum was worth far less than gold.

Presumably some of these counterfeits were made in the neighborhood of Colombia but as counterfeiters never advertise their doings, it is naturally hard to say where they were made.

In recent years many of the mining towns in Colombia have been dug up, the dumps gone over, the streets dug up for the platinum that had been thrown out years ago. This was when platinum was worth far more than gold.

A good account of this is in a pamphlet entitled "Platinum," with a special reference to Latin America, by Dr. George F. Kunz,

which appeared in the Nov. 1917 issue of the Bulletin of the Pan American Union. You might write the Pan American Union, Washington, D. C., to see if they have any copies of this for sale.

TURN that marshy meadow into a duck preserve.

Request:—Will you send me the necessary information on building a duck pond? I'd also like some information on the habits of mallard, canvasback and teal. What plants shall I put in my duck pond for them?

—JOHN CAROTHERS, Eugene, Oregon.

Reply by Mr. Davis Quinn:—As you do not supply me with any particulars regarding the nature of the site on which the pond is to be made, I shall have to be general in reply. Ducks do not like deep water; a shallow place, from one to three feet or at most five feet deep attracts them best. The larger the area of water the better, of course, although quite a worthy retreat for wildfowl can be created out of two or three acres of properly flooded land. If you are making the pond artificially it is a good idea to leave one or two islands in the middle, where the birds will be safe from molestation. Such a refuge can be made out of a wet meadow, with little labor, by the simple expedient of a dam. A little digging may be necessary, and possibly the use of dynamite. The proper type of situation can be worked into a very creditable waterfowl preserve at little expense.

It is well to plant the shores of the pond, part of which should, of course, be marshy, with evergreens and other plants offering maximum cover and privacy to the birds. Then run a high fence completely around the whole thing, well outside the margin of the pond. This will keep out dogs, and other pests of the gamekeeper. Above all, see that the birds are not interfered with by human annoyers with guns or otherwise. Ducks, and all other forms of wildlife, respond more quickly to protection than anything else; and where they are protected they not only come back year after year but, as Jack Miner will tell you, they seem to "tell" other ducks, and pretty soon you will have to be enlarging your pond and asking charity subscriptions with which to buy corn to feed the critters. That is, if the half million "sports" who shot down a large part of the drought-stricken remnants of our waterfowl this last season do not finish off the remainder this fall.

The ducks are in a bad way. The best informed conservationists in the country predict the extermination of these birds within five years, if during the next few months Congress does not support them with a fully closed season for one year.

Your pond and marsh should be planted with natural duck foods such as wild rice, wild celery, pond weeds, delta potato, chufa, wild millet, banana waterlily, frogbit, watercress, waterweed and coontail. Select from this list those plants that grow wild near the pond, and forget most of the others. If you have to buy any of these, get in touch with the Wisconsin Aquatic Nurseries, or Terrell's Aquatic Farm, both at Oshkosh, Wisc. If you face an unusual problem in connection with your contemplated duck preserve, these people are specialists and will be glad to render you valuable advice.

As it would require more space than I am permitted in this letter to cover the ways and habits of mallard, canvasback, and teal, may I suggest that you obtain this information from any one of the many excellent bird books that are found in most public libraries, and that contain complete life-histories of all native species. Wish you luck. It is good to hear from one who desires to encourage these birds instead of destroy them! An inquiry addressed to the State Game Commission at Salem, Ore., would probably produce some helpful suggestions for you.

LEARN to swim before you sail a canoe.

Request:—Will you please advise me if there is a sailing canoe that is reasonably safe for boys? There are three boys at our summer place, aged 14, 12 and 8; the former two are good swimmers. They want a sailing canoe, and claim that there is one with a built-in air pocket along the rail that cannot be sunk or overturned. They believe it is called a sponson.

Will you discuss the merits aand disadvantages of this as well as other canoes, particularly with regard to safety: sudden tipping over, unmanageability in storm, etc? We have a three-mile like, on which nasty little wind storms come up at times.

Can these sailing canoes be paddled easily, when you want to merely paddle, or troll, or when there is no wind?

—PAUL GOULD, New York, N. Y.

Reply by Mr. A. R. Knauer:—The sponson canoe can be tipped over, but it is quite a difficult thing to do accidentally. The sponson is really an extra bulge that runs from bow to stern along the outside top edge of the gunwale, and it is not an air chamber but filled with cork.

When the canoe tips far enough for the sponson to touch the water, it gives the craft the effect of that much more width and practically keeps it from tipping over. However sailing improperly with a large sail in a strong wind—and over they go.

It is without question the safest open canoe to use. A sponson canoe will float higher in the water when it is full than the others. Possibly you do not realize the fact that none of the standard wood and canvas covered canoes will sink and with care can support two people as long as they can stay with it.

Would suggest a sixteen foot Otca Model Old Town sponson canoe with a forty-five sq. ft. lateen rig or a Kennebec of the same dimensions.

It is very simple to take the sailing rig mentioned above out of a canoe and paddle.

I have never believed in anybody using a canoe who was not a good swimmer. If they are and can use their heads no harm could come to them on the little lake you mention.

Meac Fliders, 12 So. Market St., Chicago, Ill., makes a kayak with a sailing rig that has outriggers. They claim this craft to be non-sinkable, and with the outrigger it would be impossible to tip it over. It might be the answer to your need and give the boys the fun of assembling it.

REMODELING a gun grip—

Request:—I am shooting a Smith &Wesson .38-.44, five-inch barrel and I don't like the way their standard grip fits my hand. I put on a Pachmayr rubber adapter which makes it just right for me. But now I'd like to know if there is anyone making a wood grip or adapter to fit my gun. The rubber grip adapter comes off black on my hand in hot weather.

What I am looking for is either a grip or adapter for my present grip that will give me a grip such as the H & R or Iver Johnson are putting on their target guns. I need something to take up some space between my second finger and the frame. Have seen the new adapter the S & W furnished with their new Magnum gun and it's the right idea but is made of soft rubber which is not durable enough.

—GEORGE W. BROWN, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Reply by Ol' Man Wiggins:—Two courses are open to you on the grip proposition; first, to coat the face of the present device with shellac, which will set and prevent any softening of the rubber to black your hands up; or to order from Mr. Walter Roper, Springfield, Mass. a pair of his walnut grips.

And here's what Ol' Man Wiggins does to his six shooters of the modern military type. First he rasps a hard block of old walnut gunstock across the grain with a fine rasp, accumulating half a teacup full, or something like that. He then puts a thin coat of Du-Pont Household Cement on the front of the grip, the metal part, and allows it to dry. Meanwhile, he is mixing the walnut wood powder into a nice plastic mass with more of the cement, and when the coating on the grip is nearly dry, he puts on a good big mass of the plastic mess, and allows it to dry a few days, and shrink all it wants. And then for the keen fine blade of his jack knife, and a little work with the steel wool. And you can make any fit you wish, and at a very low cost. I find it perfectly suited to my needs, and it harmonizes well with the grip plates, especially as after it's all properly shaped, I coat it with cement, and when that's nearly dry, I dust on a final coat of the wood powder to prevent any glossy finish showing, and allow it to dry.

INFRA-red rays emanate from a hot flat iron.

Request:—Will you please give me some information on infra-red rays? How are they produced, and are the units which produce them expensive?

—MILTON SECHRIST, Ben Anor, Pa.

Reply by Mr. Paul L. Anderson:—The gamma rays of radium, X-rays, ultra-violet rays, visible light, infra-red rays, Hertzian rays, and the rays of radio are all the same except for their wave-length, that is, the distance from the crest of one wave to the crest of the next.

The gamma rays are the shortest, the radio rays the longest, and since the range of wave-lengths to which the human eye is sensitive is very short, other kinds of apparatus must be used to register those be-

yond the range of the eye. The ordinary sensitive photographic plate will register most of the short ones; a thermometer will register those a trifle too long for the eye to see; and other apparatus registers those still longer. Therefore the infra-red rays—that is, those whose wave-length is slightly longer than that of the so-called red rays—are also known as heat rays, and specially sensitized photographic plates will record them.

Therefore any source of heat is also a source of infra-red rays, examples being the sun, a kerosene lamp, an electric light bulb, a stove, a hot-water bag, an electric curling-iron, a hot flat-iron, a lighted match, an automobile engine, etc., etc. So take your choice. Of course some of these also give off visible rays, but some do not. I have known of photographs being taken by the "light" of an electric flat-iron. Any of these "units" may therefore be used as a source of infra-red rays.

YOU cannot hope to make a leather boot water-tight.

Request:—Will you tell me how to waterproof a boot? I have a pair of high leather boots, and none of the products I've tried has kept them from leaking.

—Henry Kimball, Lowell, Mass.

Reply by Mr. Paul M. Fink:—In so far as I know there is no satisfactory method of making a leather boot perfectly and permanently waterproof. And if there were, the boot would be no more comfortable on a long march than a rubber boot would be, tending to make the feet tender and sore, from the confined heat and moisture.

The best we can do is to treat the leather with some preparation that will make it *water-repellent*, and to renew this treatment as the compound works out of the seams and the pores of the leather. For a long time I have simply used neatsfoot oil. Paint it on the boot, with careful attention to seams and the space between the sole and upper. Then put the boot in a *very gentle* heat until the oil has disappeared into the leather. Repeat two or three times, until the pores are filled. This will not keep the feet perfectly dry in an all day march through deep mud and slush, but will turn most of the water, and has the virtue of letting the leather dry soft. Treat again as needed.

Another preparation often used is equal parts of beeswax, tallow and neatsfoot oil. Melt all together and apply while warm.

MAKING a comfortable box for a pet water snake.

Request:—How large a box should I use to keep a three foot water snake in and how should I arrange it?

How can I keep a snake all winter?

What is the proper method for skinning a snake and how is the skin tanned?

Where are snakes' nests usually found?

—Francis Groves, Baltimore, Md.

Reply by Mr. Clifford Pope:—Snakes do very well in relatively small quarters. Your water snake should live in a box two to three feet long by one to two feet wide. The depth will make little difference. It is necessary to have only a pan of water in the box. As a matter of fact water snakes will live with only enough water to drink but they undoubtedly enjoy spending some of their time in water. Two precautions must be taken: (a) Always keep at least half of the box dry; (b) Never let the box get heated throughout by the sun or place it so that the snake cannot crawl into shade at will. A certain amount of sun is good for snakes but too much quickly kills them because they have no way of keeping their temperature down.

If you keep a snake warm (say in ordinary room temperature) it will live through the winter.

The easiest way to skin a snake is to cut the skin down the middle of the belly and pull it right off, being very careful when working on head and tail. After it is off, all fat and extra meat should be scraped away. Tanning leather is not in my line so I cannot tell you how to do it properly. However, a skin can be preserved in fairly good shape in the following way. Soak it for two weeks in a strong brine to which has been added a fluid ounce of sulphuric acid for every half gallon of brine. Then dry it by covering well with dry sawdust. The skin should of course be spread out flat in the sawdust.

Different kinds of snakes lay their eggs in different sorts of situations. Decaying wood in old stumps and logs is the type of place often chosen. I would advise you to read about the habits of snakes in "The Reptile Book" by Raymond L. Ditmars, a book procurable at any good library.

The common water snake is non-poisonous though often vicious. It frequents rivers, streams, and the edges of ponds and shores of lakes where it feeds on frogs, fishes and other small animals. The young are produced alive in the late summer. One female gives birth to a large number of young at a time. When frightened the water snake generally takes to the water and conceals itself under any available object therein. It suns itself on debris or bushes along or over the water.

A CHILEAN stamp commemorates Robinson Crusoe.

Request:—I should like to have some data about a stamp of Peru, which by mistake, bore the picture of the Statue of Liberty instead of a similar statue presented to Peru by France. No reference is given to this in the Scott catalog, though I have heard that the stamp was immediately recalled after a few had been sold to the public. When did this happen?

Also, in the catalog no reference has been made as to the reason why the Chile stamps were overprinted Isles De Juan Fernandez, in 1910. I have read somewhere that this was done as a sort of commemoration of Robinson Crusoe's landing on the island—that is to say, the sailor who actually did land on this island and spent some years in isolation there. Have you any facts regarding this overprint and surcharge?

Lastly, I have tried in vain all possible sources in an effort to learn the name of the first United States submarine carrying mail. I understand it was in 1927, on one of the "S" type submarines, but no one seems to know the name of the submarine.

—J. W. Clifford, New York, N. Y.

Reply by Dr. H. A. Davis:—The ten cent rose of 1934, Scott's No. 315 is no doubt the stamp you have in mind as being issued by Peru. There was no mistake about it that I ever heard of. It was issued simply as a liberty commemorative stamp. Uruguay, in 1918 also issued a set of stamps with a picture of the Statue of Liberty, there being six stamps in the set. They were issued as a peace commemoration set. While the Uruguain design was made from our Statue of Liberty, the chances are that the Peruvian design was made from some illustration of it. None of these stamps were ever recalled. The Peruvian stamp can still be purchased for a cent or two as well as the lower values of the Uruguayian set.

Alexander Selkirk in 1704-09 was marooned on one of the Juan Fernandez Islands, (Masatierra, the particular island). These islands lie about three hundred eighty miles west of Valparaiso; they are volcanic. The story of Robinson Crusoe is supposed to have been written with the idea obtained from Selkirk's experiences on the island. The 1910 issue of Chile surcharged "Isles de Juan Fernandez" was in commemoration of Selkirk's life on the island. They were simply commemorative and were good for postage in Chile.

Perhaps the United States Postoffice Dept., Washington, D. C. can give you information about the first submarine carrying mail.

INDISCRIMINATE digging destroys historical data.

Request:—Each summer my father and I go into Southern Utah several times on fishing trips. I am very much interested in archeology and would therefore like some "dope" on excavating ruins, caches, etc. Is there any law against taking Indian relics from these caches? If so, how may I get permission to excavate them. My friend and I are planning a two months' stay in the mountains near Torrey next summer, and we expect to find a few things while we are there. I started a small museum when I was eight years old and I now have quite a few pioneer and other relics. I am now sixteen. My collection of Indian relics, however, is very limited because I do not like to buy them. The only relics I have I've found and know to be the real stuff.

Will you please describe the necessary education for a museum worker? Are there any correspondence courses one can take instead of going to college? Do you know of any Indian "stomping grounds" near Salt Lake besides Grantsville?

—Robert Burce, Salt Lake City, Utah

Reply by Mr. Arthur Woodward:—The best thing you could do would be to plan on taking University courses in anthropology, specializing in material culture. At present, there is no one school which will give you all the information needed on archeological procedure. As far as I am aware, there are no correspondence courses offered in this field. A correspondence course would be of little value in making such studies.

If I were you, I would confine myself at the present time, to reading and studying along archeological and ethnological lines, rather than do a lot of digging for the reason that you may in the course of your work, destroy evidence in your section of your country, which as you grow older, you might regret and, if you have undergone a thorough training in such matters, you will learn that there is a great difference between haphazard efforts and those guided by practice.

Apparently, your collection consists of the usual assortment of arrow-heads, pestles, axes, pottery, etc. I have seen hundreds of such collections. The fact that you do not buy them in curio stores seems to be one indication of the earnest desire to work along the right path. One of the prime evils of archeological collecting today is the person whom professional archeologists term a "pot-hunter." Often times, such men are merely imbued with the idea of obtaining a large collection of Indian specimens. They do not recognize cultural divisions nor attempt any solutions of problems through a study of the material or the region where it is found. Such men dig, buy, sell, and trade specimens and often accumulate great quantities of items, but when all is said and done, all they have is a collection of curios.

There is a law against the excavation of specimens on Federal Lands. This law was passed in 1906 and prohibits the excavation or removal of any archeological specimens from public lands. Anyone who wishes to dig or remove from cliff-dwelling or caves any Indian specimens, on such property, must obtain a permit from the Department of the Interior. This permit will not be issued to private collectors, operating as individuals and for their own personal collections. Only those people who are representatives of some recognized public institution, having a proper place for housing such material, will get this permission.

As far as I am aware, there is no law which prohibits the acquisition of such material on privately owned lands, unless, of course, the owner of such property objects. Several states have laws which prohibit the removal of archeological specimens from the land, unless permission is obtained from the proper state authorities.

If I were you, I would take my notebook and my camera, making a survey of the region in which you propose to spend the summer, and instead of digging into all the sites you find, for the sake of a few specimens, I would make a map of the region and chart thereon all of the caves, cliff-dwellings, burial ground, surface ruins, etc., and take ample notes of these sites, and sketches, if necessary. Surface collecting, of course, is not as dangerous as digging. If you were to make such notes and type surface collections from exposed sites, then report to the University of Utah the nature of your discoveries, I am sure you would learn more and feel more satisfied in the long run, than if you attempted to go ahead and dig on your own hook.

THE Oak Island treasure is protected by natural forces.

Request:—Do you know of an Island along the coast of Nova Scotia by the name of Oak Island? If so, could you give me the location and how to get there? Could you tell me about the time of year the freeze-up starts there?

—CLYDE RIGGS, Gold Butte, Mont.

Reply by Mr. F. L. Bowden:—Yes, there is an Oak Island off the eastern coast of Nova Scotia, located in the Bay of Fundy. This island is privately owned, so if you are thinking of looking for the buried treasure there, which I suppose is your interest in this island, I might as well tell you that the rights for trying to locate this treasure have been let to a syndicate for some time past.

In the past ten years I have probably answered eight or ten letters regarding this treasure. What has happened is that either the island has sunk, or due to sismatic disturbances, the water from the Bay of Fundy has now flooded the cache.

The last I heard they had installed several large centrifical pumps with gasoline engines for power, but even these were unable to take care of the water that came into the excavation. Therefore I understand they have quit for the present, and have decided that a coffer dam will have to be built.

The Bay of Fundy never freezes, due to the excessive high tides, (from thirty to forty-five feet) and the freeze-up of the land starts about the middle of November.

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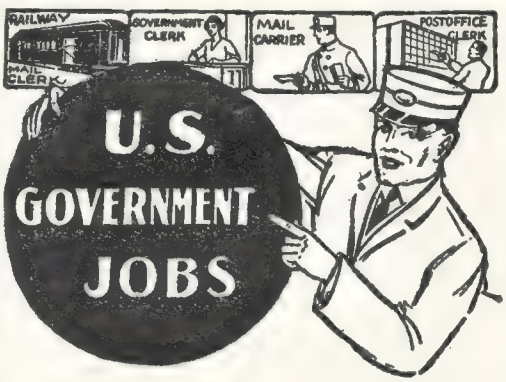

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28x4.75-19	2.45	.95
29x4.75-20	2.50	.95
29x5.00-19	2.85	1.05
30x5.00-20	2.85	1.05
5.25-17	2.90	1.15
28x5.25-18	2.90	1.15
29x5.25-19	2.95	1.15
30x5.25-20	2.95	1.15
31x5.25-21	3.25	1.15
5.50-17	3.35	1.15
28x5.50-18	3.35	1.15
29x5.50-19	3.35	1.15
6.00-17	3.40	1.15
30x6.00-18	3.40	1.15
31x6.00-19	3.40	1.15
32x6.00-20	3.45	1.25
33x6.00-21	3.65	1.25
32x6.50-20	3.75	1.35
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32x4	2.95	.85	
32x4	2.95	.85	
34x4	3.25	.85	
32x4½	3.35	1.15	
33x4½	$3.45	$1.15	
34x4½	3.45	1.15	
30x3	3.65	1.25	
32x5	3.75	1.45	
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32x6	3.95	1.45	
34x6	4.25	2.00	
32x6	7.95	2.75	
36x6	9.95	3.95	
34x7	$10.95	$3.95	
38x7	10.95	3.95	
36x8	11.45	3.95	
40x8	13.25	4.15	

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Size Tires	Tubes	Size Tires	Tubes
6.00-20	$3.75	$1.65	
6.50-20	4.45	1.95	
7.00-20	8.95	2.95	
7.50-20	$9.95	$3.75	
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9.75-20	13.95	6.45	

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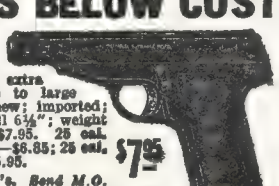

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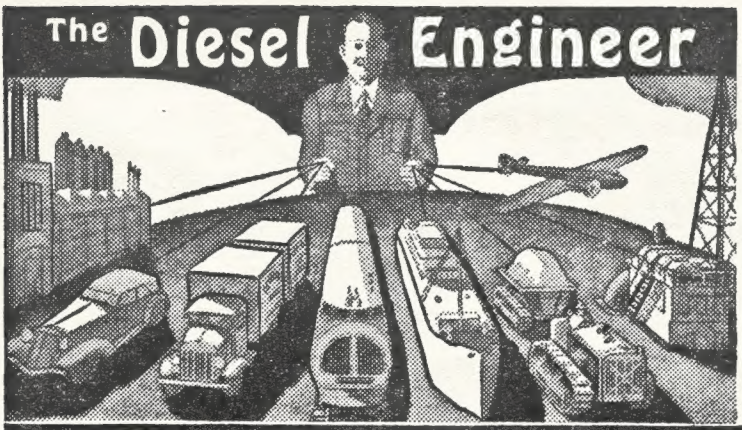

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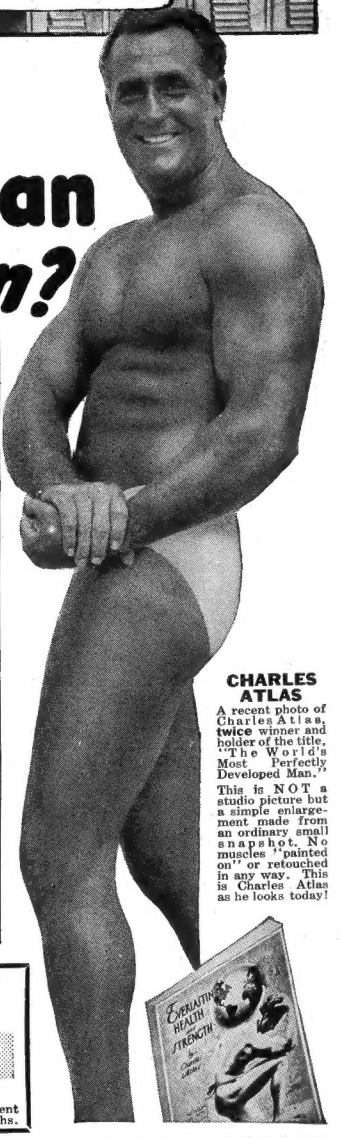

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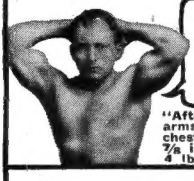
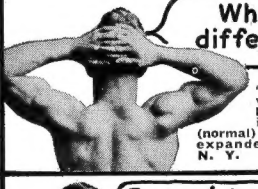
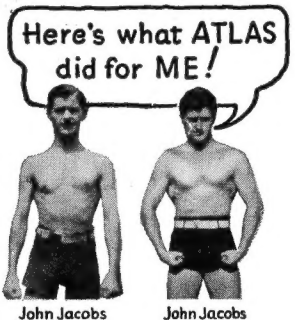


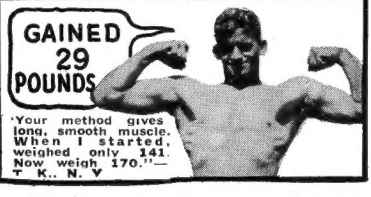
"After ONE WEEK my arms increased 1½ in., chest 2½ in., forearm ⅞ in., and I have gained 4 lbs."—C. S. W., Va.



"Started a week ago. Have put 3½ in. on chest (normal) and 2½ in. expanded."—F. S., N. Y.



"Am sending snapshot of wonderful progress. Certainly recommend you for quick results!"—W. G., N. J.



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CHARLES ATLAS

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This is NOT a studio picture but a simple enlargement made from an ordinary small snapshot. No muscles "painted on" or retouched in any way. This is Charles Atlas as he looks today!

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"SPORT, even for the fun of it, can be tense and tiring," says Miss Gloria Wheeden, who is shown aquaplaning above and at left. "Like most of the folks who go in for water sports, I pride myself on my physical condition. Yes, I smoke. When I feel a bit let-down, I light up a Camel and get a 'lift' in energy." When an active day drains physical and nervous energy, Camels help you renew your flow of vim. And being mild, they never get on your nerves.

"MANY A TIME I've smoked a Camel to get a 'lift,'" says Harry Burmester printer, *{left}*. "With Camels handy, I feel I can take the tough spots right in stride. Camels never tire my taste or irritate my throat—even smoking as much as I do."

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1060 PARACHUTE JUMPS—no mishaps! Floyd Stimson *{right}* started smoking Camels at his first parachute jump. "Camels are so mild I take healthy nerves for granted," says Floyd. "I've found what I want in Camels. Mildness — tastiness."

Get a Lift with a Camel!